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# THE TIN BOX

and What it Contained

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Author of "The Errand Boy," "Joe's Luck,"  
"Mark Manning's Mission," "Mark  
Mason's Victory," etc., etc.

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# THE TIN BOX

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## CHAPTER I

### A COLLISION

"HAVE you finished breakfast already, Harry?" asked Mrs. Gilbert, as Harry rose hurriedly from the table and reached for his hat, which hung on a nail especially appropriated to it.

"Yes, mother. I don't want to be late for the store. Saturday is always a busy day."

"It is a long day for you, Harry. You have to stay till nine o'clock in the evening."

"I am always glad to have Saturday come, for then I can get my money," replied Harry, laughing. "Well, good-by, mother—I'm off."

"What should I do without him?" said Mrs. Gilbert to herself, as Harry dashed out of the yard on the way to Mead's grocery store, where he had been employed for six months.

That would have been a difficult question to answer. Mrs. Gilbert was the widow of a sea cap-

tain, who had sailed from the port of Boston three years before, and never since been heard of.

It was supposed that the vessel was lost with all hands, but how the disaster occurred, or when, was a mystery that seemed never likely to be solved.

Captain Gilbert had left no property except the small cottage, which was mortgaged for half its value, and a small sum of money in the savings bank, which, by this time, was all expended for the necessities of life.

Fortunately for the widow, about the time this sum gave out Harry obtained a situation at Mead's grocery store, with a salary of four dollars a week. This he regularly paid to his mother, and, with the little she herself was able to earn, they lived comfortably. It was hard work for Harry, but he enjoyed it, for he was an active boy, and it was a source of great satisfaction to him that he was able to help his mother so materially.

He was now fifteen years old, about the average height for a boy of that age, with a strong frame and a bright, cheerful manner that made him a general favorite.

The part of his duty which he liked best was to drive the store wagon for the delivery of goods to customers. Most boys of his age like to drive a horse, and Harry was no exception to the rule.

When he reached the store Mr. Mead, his employer, said:

"Harness up the horse as soon as you can, Harry. There are some goods to be carried out."

"All right, sir," answered Harry, cheerfully, and made his way to the stable, which stood in the rear of the store. It was but a few minutes before he was loaded up and was on his way.

He had called at several places and left the greater part of the goods, when he found himself in a narrow road, scarcely wider than a lane. Why it had been made so narrow was unaccountable, for there was certainly land enough to be had, and that of little value, which could have been used. It was probably owing to a want of foresight on the part of the road commissioners.

Just at the narrowest part of the road Harry saw approaching him an open buggy of rather a pretentious character, driven by a schoolmate, Philip Ross, the son of Colonel Ross, a wealthy resident of the village.

I have said that Philip was, or rather had been, a schoolmate of Harry. I cannot call him a friend. Philip was of a haughty, arrogant temper. The horse and buggy he drove were his own—that is, they had been given him by his father on his last birthday—and he was proud of them, not without some reason, for the buggy was a handsome one, and the horse was spirited and of fine appearance.

As soon as Harry saw Philip approaching, he proceeded to turn his horse to one side of the road.

Philip, however, made no such move, but kept in the middle.

"Isn't he going to turn out?" thought Harry. "How does he expect to get by?"

"Why don't you turn out, Philip?" he called out.

"Turn out yourself!" retorted Philip, haughtily.

"That's what I'm doing," said Harry, rather provoked.

"Then turn out more!" said the young gentleman, arrogantly.

"I have turned out my share," said Harry, stopping his horse. "Do you expect to keep right on in the middle of the road?"

"I shall if I choose," said Philip, unpleasantly; but he, too, reined up his horse, so that the two teams stood facing each other.

Harry shrugged his shoulders, and asked, temperately:

"Then how do you expect to get by?"

"I want you to turn out as far as you can," he said authoritatively.

Harry was provoked, and not without reason.

"I have turned out my share, and shan't turn out another inch," he said, firmly. "You must be a fool to expect it."

"Do you mean to call me a fool?" demanded Philip, his eyes flashing.

"You certainly act like one."



"You'd better take care how you talk, you beggar!" exclaimed Philip, furiously.

"I'm no more a beggar than you are, Philip Ross!"

"Well, you are nothing but a working boy, at any rate."

"What if I am?" replied Harry. "I've got just as much right on this road as you."

"I'm a gentleman," asserted Philip, angrily.

"Well, you don't act like one; you'd better turn out pretty quick, for I am in a hurry and can't wait."

"Then turn out more."

"I shan't do it," said Harry, with spirit; "and no one but you would be unreasonable enough to ask me to do it."

"Then you'll have to wait," said Philip, settling himself back provokingly in his seat, and eyeing Harry with a look of disdain.

"Come, don't be obstinate, Philip," urged Harry, impatiently. "I only ask you to do your share of turning. We have equal rights here, even if you were three times the gentleman you pretend to be."

"You are insolent, Harry Gilbert. I don't take orders from such as you."

"Then you won't turn out?" asked Harry, gathering up his reins.

"Suppose I don't?" retorted Philip, in a provoking tone.

"Then I shall drive on," said Harry, resolutely.

"You wouldn't dare to!"

"Wouldn't I? You'll see. I will count ten, and if at the end of that time you don't turn out, I will drive on, and make you take the consequences."

Philip glanced at him doubtfully. Would he really do what he said?

"Pooh! I don't believe it!" he decided. "Anyway, I'm not going to give way to a working boy. I won't do it."

I am not going to decide the question whether Harry did right or not. I can only say that he claimed no more than his rights, and was not without excuse for the course he adopted.

"One—two—three!" counted Harry, and so on until he had counted ten.

Then, gathering up his reins, he said:

"I ask you, Philip, for the last time, whether you will turn out?"

"I won't till I get ready."

"Go 'long, Dobbin!" was Harry's sole reply. And his horse was put in motion.

The natural result followed. The grocery wagon was strongly made, and fitted for rough usage. The buggy was of light structure, built for speed, and was no match for it. The two carriages locked wheels. That of the wagon was unharmed, but the wheel of the buggy came off.

The horse darted forward. Philip was thrown

out at the side, aiming an ineffectual blow with his whip at Harry, as he found himself going, and landed in a half stunned condition on the grass at the side.

Harry kept on until his wagon was clear of the wreck of the buggy, and then halting it, jumped off to find the extent of Philip's injuries.

The latter's horse, which had by a violent jerk freed himself from the shafts, was galloping up the road.

## CHAPTER II

## SIGNS OF A TEMPEST

"ARE you hurt, Philip?" asked Harry, anxiously, as he bent over the prostrate form of his antagonist.

As he opened his eyes and saw the face of Harry bending over him, all came back to him, and his animosity revived.

"Get away from me!" he exclaimed furiously, as he staggered to his feet.

"I certainly will, if you don't need help," said Harry, glad that Philip had suffered no harm.

"Where is my horse?" demanded Philip.

"He has run away."

"And it's all your fault!" exclaimed Philip, angrily. "My buggy's broken, too, and all because you ran into me, you beggar!"

"I wouldn't allow you to call me names if you hadn't been punished already for your unreasonable conduct," said Harry, calmly. "Whatever has happened you brought upon yourself."

"Catch my horse!" ordered Philip, with the air of a master addressing a servant.

"I've got something else to do," said Harry, coolly, and he sprang into the store wagon.

"Are you going to drive off and leave me here?" demanded Philip, enraged.

"I must, for my time isn't my own. It belongs to Mr. Mead. I would help you otherwise—though you are to blame for what has happened."

"You will suffer for this!" exclaimed the rich man's son, gazing at his broken buggy in helpless anger. "You'll have to pay for all the damage you have done!"

"You can go to law about it, if you want to," said Harry, as he gathered the reins into his hands, and he drove off. "I've a good defense."

To Philip's disgust, Harry drove off, leaving him alone with his disabled carriage. It was a good time to consider whether he had acted wisely in demanding more than the law or custom allowed him, but Philip was too angry for cool consideration.

He could not persuade himself that a boy like Harry, the son of a poor widow, who had to work for his own living, had equal rights with himself.

In the end he had to go home and bring back his father's hired man to take charge of the wreck. He learned that the frightened horse had already found his way to the stable, terrifying the family

with fears that Philip had been seriously hurt on the way.

Philip gave a garbled account of the affair to his father and mother, and excited the indignation of both, but especially his mother.

"I never heard of such an outrage—never!" exclaimed Mrs. Ross, emphatically. "To think that boy should deliberately run into you and endanger your life—my poor Philip!"

"That's just what he did, mother," said Philip, enjoying the indignation he had aroused.

Colonel Ross was not quite so thoroughly convinced that his son was right.

"Did you give Harry half the road?" he inquired.

"I gave him room enough to get by," answered Philip, evasively.

"The law requires that you should give him half the road."

"I hope, Mr. Ross, you don't justify that horrid boy in running into Philip?" said Mrs. Ross, sharply.

"No, my dear; I consider that he acted very badly. But, in order to make him amenable to the law for the damage Philip's team suffered, it must appear that Philip gave him half the road."

"Then the law ought to be altered," said Mrs. Ross, with more anger than reason. "I've no doubt that Philip gave him all the room he needed.

When you were thrown out, did the heartless boy ride on and leave you to your fate?" asked the mother.

"No; he got out and asked me if I was hurt," Philip admitted, reluctantly.

"Much he cared!" said Mrs. Ross, contemptuously.

"I suppose he was afraid he would be put in prison if I was killed," said Philip.

"Yes, that was his motive, undoubtedly. He didn't offer to help you, I suppose?"

"No; I asked him to, and he wouldn't," answered Philip, glad that he could blacken poor Harry's character.

"The unfeeling young villain!" ejaculated Mrs. Ross. "He ought to be put in the State's prison!"

"Do you think he can be?" asked Philip, eagerly.

"Of course he can, if your father exerts himself as he ought."

"Nonsense, Lucinda!" said Colonel Ross, who was not a fool. "It was a boyish misunderstanding."

"You may call it that," retorted Mrs. Ross, raising her voice. "I call it a high-handed outrage. The boy ought to be arrested. Are you going to do anything about it, Philander Ross?"

Mrs. Ross generally addressed her husband by his Christian name when she was angry with him.

"I will tell you what I will do, Lucinda. I will

see Mead, and tell him that a boy who acts in that way is not fit to drive for him."

"That's right, father. Make him discharge Harry. Then he'll have to go to the poorhouse, or beg."

"And a very suitable punishment for him," said Mrs. Ross, approvingly.

"I don't quite like to take the boy's means of living away from him," said Colonel Ross, who was by no means as unfeeling as his wife and son. "That would make his mother suffer, and she has been guilty of no crime."

"She will uphold him in his iniquity, you may rest assured, Mr. Ross," said his wife, nodding emphatically. "If she had brought up the boy to be respectful to his superiors this would not have happened."

"He won't be able to pay damages if he loses his place," said Colonel Ross.

"I don't care. I want him discharged from his situation."

"Well, Lucinda," said her husband, shrugging his shoulders, "you had better undertake the management of the affair. I am very busy, and can't spare the necessary time."

"I will!" said Mrs. Ross, with alacrity. "I will call on the boy's mother, and also on Mr. Mead."

"Don't be too extreme, Lucinda. Remember, it isn't a hanging matter."



"I am not so sure but it ought to be. My poor child might have broken his neck. Oh, it makes my blood run cold when I think that he might be lying lifeless before me at this moment."

"Don't say such things, mother," said Philip, nervously, unpleasantly affected by the picture his mother had drawn.

"I can't help saying it, for it might have happened."

"Where are you going to first, mother?" asked Philip.

"I will go first and call on Widow Gilbert. I consider her responsible, for if she had brought up the boy better this would never have happened."

"May I go with you?"

"No; I would rather go alone."

If Philip had only been scarred, or had a wound to show, his mother would have taken him with her, to make her reproof more effective, but, as he showed no marks of the encounter, she saw no advantage in his presence.

"You just give it to her, mother," said Philip, in a tone of satisfaction.

"I shall know what to say, my son."

"Just frighten her, and make her think we are going to have Harry arrested."

"I shall make her understand that the boy has done a very serious thing, and has made himself amenable to the law."

"That's right, mother. Harry is too airy altogether. He seems to think that I am no better than he is—a common working boy like him!"

Mrs. Ross sailed out of the room, and dressed herself with unusual care, not out of respect for Mrs. Gilbert, but rather with the purpose of impressing her with her grandeur.

## CHAPTER III

## MRS. ROSS MAKES TWO UNSATISFACTORY VISITS

IT was very seldom that Mrs. Ross condescended to visit her poorer neighbors, and it was, therefore, not without considerable surprise that Mrs. Gilbert—called to the door about eleven o'clock, just as she had put on the potatoes to boil for dinner—recognized in the visitor on the doorstep Mrs. Colonel Ross.

"Pray come in, Mrs. Ross. I am glad to see you," said the widow.

"I will come in for five minutes," said Mrs. Ross, carefully gathering up her skirts, lest they should be soiled as she entered the humble cottage. She need not have been alarmed, for there was not a cleaner house in the village.

Mrs. Gilbert brought forward the most comfortable chair in her little sitting-room, and the visitor seated herself.

"I am come on an unpleasant errand, Mrs. Gilbert," she commenced, frigidly.

"Unpleasant!" repeated the widow, with quick

apprehension. "Has anything happened to my boy—to Harry?"

Improbable as it seemed that in such an event Mrs. Ross should be the messenger of ill tidings, it occurred to Mrs. Gilbert that she had come to inform her of an accident to Harry.

The visitor's lips curled. What did it matter, she thought, whether anything happened to him or not?

"Something has happened to my boy!" she said, with emphasis.

"I am very sorry," said the widow, with quick sympathy. "I hope he is not hurt."

"He might have had his neck broken," said Mrs. Ross; "and by your son," she added, spitefully.

"They haven't been fighting, have they?" asked Mrs. Gilbert, nervously.

"No; but your son deliberately and maliciously, while driving Mr. Mead's store wagon, drove into my son's light buggy, damaged it seriously, and my poor Philip was thrown out. Your son drove off, leaving him insensible by the roadside."

It will be perceived that Mrs. Ross had somewhat embellished the story, with the intention of producing a greater effect.

"Was Philip much hurt?" asked the widow, anxiously.

"He providentially escaped any serious injury,

so far as we know. He may have suffered some internal injuries."

"I am sorry to hear that there has been any difficulty," said the widow, regaining her composure when she learned that neither of the two boys were hurt; "but I cannot accept your account. Harry is quite incapable of deliberately and maliciously running into Philip."

"I regret that you uphold your son in his wickedness," said Mrs. Ross, coldly; "but I am not surprised. I told my husband before I set out that you would probably do so."

"Mrs. Ross," said the widow, in a dignified tone, "I have known my boy for fifteen years, and watched him carefully, and I tell you positively that he wouldn't do what you have charged upon him."

"Do you question my statement?" demanded Mrs. Ross, haughtily.

"Did you witness the encounter?"

"No; but my son, who is the soul of truth, told me all the circumstances."

"Your son was probably angry with Harry, and could not be depended upon to give an impartial statement."

"Slander him as much as you please," said the visitor, angrily. "I have acquainted you with your son's outrageous conduct, and this is all I proposed. Of course we shall expect you or your son to pay for the damage done to the buggy, and he will be

fortunate if we do not have him arrested for assault and battery."

Mrs. Gilbert did not look as much terrified as Mrs. Ross expected.

"I am very poor, as you know," she replied; "but if Harry is really to blame for what has happened, I will do all that I can to repair the injury."

"I am glad to see that you are talking more sensibly."

"Don't misunderstand me," said the widow. "I have not heard Harry's statement yet. From what I know of him, I presume that Philip was more in fault than he. Of course, in that case, I shall not feel called upon to pay anything."

"Of course!" sneered Mrs. Ross; "your son will throw all the blame on my poor boy. Fortunately, we have laws; and it will be the law that must decide this matter. It isn't for you to decide whether you will pay or not."

This was meant as a threat, but Mrs. Gilbert answered, calmly:

"You won't need to invoke the law, if you have a just claim."

Mrs. Ross rose, for there seemed no more to say. She was considerably disappointed with the result of her mission. She supposed, as a matter of course, that the widow would defend her son; but she had not supposed that she would receive so calmly her threats of having recourse to the law.

Indeed, she had expected that the widow would beg and plead for mercy, and appear panic-stricken. As it was, she felt that she was retiring from the contest decidedly worsted. She would not leave without one parting shot.

"I regret, Mrs. Gilbert," she said, seriously, "that you defend your son in this high-handed outrage. I had thought better of you. I knew you were poor, and I sympathized with you. Now I feel obliged to say that you will only have yourself to blame for the steps I am about to take."

The widow bowed, but did not gratify Mrs. Ross by inquiring what those steps were.

It was very provoking, certainly.

"I shall call on Mr. Mead, and insist on his discharging your son."

Knowing what a serious blow this would be, Mrs. Gilbert did look troubled for a moment, and her visitor sailed away, with a slight feeling of satisfaction, in the direction of the grocery store.

Meanwhile Harry, on his return to the store, had reported the accident, and submitted to a close cross-examination on the part of the storekeeper.

"Do you think I am to blame, Mr. Mead?" asked Harry.

"No; I don't see how you could do otherwise than you did. Young Ross is a disagreeable young puppy; but his family trades with me, and I don't like to offend them. Still, I shall not blame you."

It will be seen that Mr. Mead was a just man, though a politic one.

"Thank you, sir," said Harry, relieved.

"I am sorry this has occurred."

"So am I, sir; but if I hadn't done as I did I should have been there now, for Philip was determined not to budge."

"Well, we must smooth it over as well as we can. I presume that I shall have a call from Colonel Ross or his wife. I hope it will be the colonel, for he won't be so unreasonable as his lady."

It so happened that the first person whom Mrs. Ross saw when she entered the grocery store was Harry.

Her eyes flashed with resentment as they fell upon the persecutor of her poor boy, but she would not waste any words upon him.

"Where is Mr. Mead?" she asked.

"I will call him, madam," answered Harry, politely.

Mr. Mead came forward, and Mrs. Ross rehearsed her story, in terms which the reader can imagine for himself.

"I think you misapprehend the matter, Mrs. Ross," said the storekeeper, politely. "Your son maintained his position in the middle of the road and required Harry to do all the turning out. Of course you are aware that the law will not sustain any one in this."

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"Who told you that my son did not turn out?" asked Mrs. Ross, hastily.

"Harry himself."

"And do you credit his story?" demanded Mrs. Ross, with a sneer.

"I have always found him to be a boy of truth."

"I believe he has wilfully deceived you. I believe he ran into my boy with the intention of injuring him," said Mrs. Ross, violently.

Harry was about to speak up, when a young man who was standing by saved him the trouble.

"I was there, Mr. Mead, and heard the whole," he said, "though neither of the boys saw me. I was in the piece to the left, behind the hedge. Phil Ross wouldn't turn out a mite, and Harry had to do as he did. When Phil was thrown out Harry got down from his team and went to see if he was hurt."

Mrs. Ross listened, pale with anger.

"I don't believe a word of it!" she said angrily. "That man is in a conspiracy with the Gilbert boy against my poor darling. I demand that you discharge Harry Gilbert from your employment!"

"I am sorry to disoblige you, Mrs. Ross, but it would be unjust," said Mr. Mead.

"Then we shall buy our groceries elsewhere!" said Mrs. Ross, spitefully tossing her head.

"I shall be sorry to lose your custom, but I see no good reason for discharging Harry."

Angrily Mrs. Ross left the store, a second time mortified at her want of success.

"I am sorry, Mr. Mead, that you are likely to lose trade on my account," said Harry, with sincere regret.

Mr. Mead smiled.

"If Mrs. Ross leaves me she will have to go five miles for her groceries," he said quietly. "We shall have them back again before long."

## CHAPTER IV

## HARRY LOSES HIS PLACE, AFTER ALL

MRS. ROSS carried out her threat, and transferred her trade to a grocery in the neighboring village, but not without considerable inconvenience.

Her pride compelled her to the course, notwithstanding the extra trouble she incurred, and this, also, she laid up against Harry. Her husband was opposed to any change, not being so spiteful as his wife, but allowed her to have her way.

Meanwhile Mr. Mead, though he regretted to lose a good customer, did not show any signs of financial weakness, and there seemed to be no prospect of his failing.

Had he done so Mrs. Ross would have been overjoyed, for she was very angry at all who upheld "that low Gilbert boy," as she designated him.

It is said that all things come to him who waits, and circumstances were shaping themselves in a very gratifying way to Mrs. Ross and her schemes of revenge.

One day as Harry was driving the store wagon which bore the name of his employer he was hailed,

about a mile from the store, by a boy about his own age, who carried in his hand a carpetbag, and appeared to be making a journey on foot.

"Hello!" said the traveler.

"Hello!" returned Harry.

"Are you working for my uncle?" asked the stranger.

"I can tell you better when I find out who your uncle is. If you are the nephew of General Grant, or the czar of Russia, I am not working for him."

"I see you like to joke," said the stranger. "My uncle is Mr. Mead, the storekeeper."

"That is the name of the man I work for."

"Then I guess you had better give me a lift, for I am going to my uncle's."

"All right! Glad to have your company."

"What's your name?" asked the stranger.

"Harry Gilbert. What's yours?"

"Howard Randall."

"Where do you live?"

"I used to live at Upton, but my father is dead, and mother—she's Mrs. Mead's sister—told me I'd better come to see if Uncle Reuben wouldn't give me a place in his store."

Instantly it flashed upon Harry that this new boy's arrival was likely to endanger his prospects. Mr. Mead, as he knew, had no occasion for the services of two boys, and he would naturally give his nephew the preference. He was not unjust

enough to take a dislike to Howard in consequence. Indeed, the new boy had a pleasant face and manner, which led him to think he would like him for a friend.

"If I do lose my place," thought Harry, "I will put my trust in God. I don't think He will see me or mother suffer, and I won't borrow trouble until it comes."

"Were you ever employed in a store?" he asked, pleasantly.

"No; that is, not regularly. I have been in our grocery store at home for a few days at a time, when the storekeeper's son was sick."

"You look as if you were about my age."

"I am sixteen. My birthday came last month."

"Then you are a little older. I am not sixteen yet."

"You look stronger than I. I should think you were older."

Harry felt flattered. All boys like to be considered strong and large for their age, and our hero was no exception to the general rule in this respect.

"I don't know about that," he answered. "I guess we are a pretty good match. How far off is Upton?"

"Fifty miles."

"You haven't walked all the way, have you?" inquired Harry, in surprise.

"Every step," said Howard, proudly. "You see, money isn't very plenty with us, and I told mother I didn't mind walking. I got a lift for a few miles the first day, so I haven't walked quite all the way."

"You and I seem to be situated pretty much the same way," said Harry. "I have no father, and we have hard work to get along."

"You seem like a tiptop fellow. I think I shall like you."

"The same to you," said Harry, smiling. "I am glad you are coming to Greenville to live."

Harry was sincere enough in his words, so far as his impressions about the boy went, but when he reflected that through him he was likely to lose his place he felt a little troubled.

"Look here!" said Howard, suddenly; "will you lose your place if uncle takes me into his store?"

"I don't think he will need two boys," replied Harry, soberly.

"Then I'd better see if I can't find a place somewhere else. I don't want to take away your place, if you are poor and need the money uncle pays you."

"I do need it, but I guess something else will turn up for me. You are Mr. Mead's nephew, and ought to have it."

"I hope we shall be friends, at any rate," said Howard, warmly.

"I am sure we shall, Howard," returned Harry, cordially, who felt attracted toward his new friend, in spite of the misfortune which his arrival would bring to him personally.

Just then, within a quarter of a mile of the store, Harry saw his young enemy, Philip Ross, approaching him.

Philip was driving his buggy, which had been repaired since the accident.

"I wonder if he will turn out for me?" thought Harry.

Philip had learned wisdom from experience, and did turn out for the store wagon. He knew Harry's firmness too well to put it to the test a second time at his own expense.

"Good-morning, Philip," said Harry, in his usual manner.

Philip did not notice Harry's salutation, but held his head very high, while his face reddened and his lip curled as he drove by his late antagonist.

"Who is that boy?" asked Howard, whose attention was drawn to Philip's singular conduct.

"Philip Ross, son of Colonel Ross, a rich man in town."

"Is he deaf?"

"No."

"He didn't seem to hear you say good-morning."

"Oh, yes, he did," answered Harry, laughing; "but Philip isn't very fond of me."

"Are you enemies?"

"We had a little difficulty lately, and Philip hasn't got over it yet."

"Tell me about it."

Harry told the story, and Howard fully sustained him in what he had done.

"He must be a mean boy."

"He thinks he has more rights than common folks, such as he considers me. He tried—or, at least, his mother did—to have Mr. Mead turn me off, but your uncle is too just a man to go against me for doing my duty."

"I noticed he gave you half the road this time," said Howard.

"Yes," answered Harry, with a smile. "He doesn't care to have his wheel taken off again."

By this time they had reached the store, and Howard introduced himself to his uncle. The next day the blow fell.

"Harry," said Mr. Mead, "I've got bad news for you. My nephew stands in need of a place, and I can't afford to keep two boys. I wish I could keep you, too."

"I see how it is, Mr. Mead," said Harry, calmly, though his heart sank within him. "Howard has the best right to the place. I trust something will turn up for me."

"I have been perfectly satisfied with you, and



am ready to give you the highest recommendation for honesty and fidelity."

"Thank you, Mr. Mead."

"You will stay till Saturday night, of course, unless something else should offer before that."

Poor Harry! His heart sank within him as he thought of the serious difference which the loss of his wages would make at home. The prospect of another situation was not very good, for Greenville was a small, quiet place, with very few places of business.

## CHAPTER V

## LOOKING FOR WORK

HARRY shrank from telling his mother that he was about to lose his place, but he knew it must be done.

In the evening, when he got home from the store, he seemed so restless that his mother asked him what was the matter with him.

"This is my last week at the store, mother," he answered, soberly. "I suppose that is what makes me feel nervous."

"Has Mr. Mead been induced by Mrs. Ross to turn you away?" asked Mrs. Gilbert, beginning to feel indignant.

"No; he isn't that kind of a man."

"Isn't he satisfied with you?"

"I ought to have told you at first that a nephew of his own needs the place, and he can't afford to employ two boys."

"I believe Mrs. Ross is at the bottom of it, after all," said Mrs. Gilbert.

"No, mother; there you are wrong," and Harry

went on to explain that Howard's appearance was a surprise to his uncle.

"What kind of a boy is he?" asked the widow, disposed to dislike in advance the boy who had been the means of depriving her son of a place.

"He's a nice fellow. I like him already. Of course I am sorry to lose my place, but, if I must, I am willing he should have it. I think we shall be good friends."

"But what are you going to do, Harry?" asked his mother, anxiously. "Your wages have been our dependence."

"I am sure I shall get something else to do, mother," said Harry, in a tone of confidence which he did not feel. "Tending store isn't the only thing to be done."

"I am sure, I hope so," said Mrs. Gilbert, despondently.

"Don't trouble yourself, mother, about the future. Just leave it to me, and you'll see if I don't get something to do."

Nevertheless, the widow could not help troubling herself. She knew that employment was hard to find—in the village, at any rate—and could not conjecture where Harry was to find it. She did not, however, say much on the subject, fearing to depress his spirits.

Saturday night came, and Harry received his wages.

"I don't know where my next week's wages are coming from, Mr. Mead," he said, soberly.

"You may be sure that I will recommend you for any employment I hear of, Harry," said Mr. Mead, earnestly. "I really wish I could afford to keep you on. You mustn't allow yourself to be discouraged."

"I won't—if I can help it," answered Harry.

The next day was Sunday, and he did not realize that he was out of a position; but, when Monday morning came, and he could lie abed as long as he pleased, with no call to work, he felt sad.

After a light breakfast, he rose from the table and took his hat.

"Where are you going, Harry?" asked his mother.

"I am going out in search of a job, mother," he replied.

The number of stores was limited, and he was pretty sure in advance that there was no opening in any one of them, but he wanted to make sure.

He applied at one after another, and without success.

"I'd take you quick enough, Harry," said Mr. Draper, the dry-goods dealer, "but I've got all the help I need."

"So I expected, Mr. Draper, but I thought I would ask."

"All right, Harry. If I hear of anything, I will

be sure to let you know," said Mr. Draper, in a friendly tone.

All this evidence of friendliness was, of course, pleasant, but the prospect of a place would have been more welcome, so poor Harry thought. At ten o'clock he reached home.

His mother looked up when he entered, but she saw, by the expression of his face, that he had not succeeded.

"You must be tired, Harry," she said. "You had better sit down and rest."

"Oh, no, I'm not tired, mother. If you'll tell me where the four-quart kettle is, I'll go and pick some blueberries."

"What will you do with so many, Harry?"

"Carry them to Mr. Mead. Every two days he sends a supply to market."

"How much does he pay?" asked the widow, brightening up at this glimpse of money to be earned.

"Eight cents a quart, payable in groceries. It won't be much, but will be better than nothing."

"So it will, Harry. I don't know but I can do better going with you than to stay at home and sew."

"No, mother; you would be sure to get a headache, exposed to the sun in the open pasture. Leave me to pick berries. It is more suitable for me."

"What time will you get home to dinner, Harry?"

"I shall not come home till the middle of the afternoon. I'll take a little lunch with me, and eat in the pasture."

So Harry started out, pail in hand, for the berry pasture. It was about a mile away, and was of large extent, comprising, probably, thirty acres of land. It was Harry's first expedition of the kind in the season, as his time had been so fully occupied at the store that he had had no leisure for picking berries.

The berries were not so plentiful as they had been somewhat earlier, but they were still to be found in considerable quantities.

Harry was not alone. Probably a dozen other persons were in the pasture, engaged in the same way as himself. All knew Harry, and some, who had not heard of his loss of place, were surprised to see him there.

"And how is it you are here, Harry?" asked Mrs. Ryan, a good-natured Irish woman, who was out, with three of her children, reaping a harvest of berries. "And how can Mr. Mead spare you?"

"Because he's got another boy," answered Harry.

"Shure it was mane to send you away, and your mother nadin' your wages."

"He couldn't help it. He had a nephew ~~that~~

needed the place. But, perhaps, I can make a fortune, like you, picking berries."

"And shure you'd have to live a hundred years to do that, and have berries ripe all the year round. It's hard work, Harry, and poor pay."

"You have the advantage of me, Mrs. Ryan. You've got three children to help you."

"And don't I have to buy food and clothes for the same? Shure, you're welcome to all they earn, if you'll board and clothe 'em."

"I didn't think of that. Perhaps I am better off as I am."

"And so ye are, I'm thinkin'."

Harry found that, exert himself as he might, Mrs. Ryan picked nearly as fast as he did. She was used to it, and her pail filled up rapidly.

Harry was glad he did not bring a larger pail, for to him, unaccustomed to bend over, the work was fatiguing, and when, as the town clock struck two, he saw his pail filled to the brim, he breathed a sigh of relief.

"If the pail held more, I shouldn't feel satisfied to stop," he said to himself, "so I'm glad it doesn't."

Mrs. Ryan had two pails and a basket, and each of her children carried a small pail, so that she remained in the pasture after Harry left.

It was shorter for Harry to go at once to the

store, instead of going round by his home, and this he resolved to do.

About twenty rods from the store, rather to his vexation, he met Philip Ross, elaborately dressed and swinging a light cane.

Philip, who had not heard of Harry's loss of place, regarded our hero with surprise, not unmixed with curiosity. But for his curiosity, he would have passed him without a word. Curiosity conquered dislike, and he inquired:

"Does Mead send you out to pick berries?"

"No," answered Harry.

"Haven't you been picking berries?"

"This looks like it, doesn't it?"

"Of course. Have you a holiday?"

"Yes, a long holiday. I am not working for Mr. Mead now."

An expression of joy lighted up the face of Philip.

"Has he discharged you?" he asked.

"He has taken his nephew in my place."

"And so you have to pick berries for a living?" asked Philip, in exultation.

"Yes," answered Harry, coolly.

"I must go home and tell mother," said Philip, briskly. "Wait a minute, though. Do you want a job?"

"Yes," responded Harry, rather surprised that Philip should feel any interest in the matter.



"Then I can give you one. Come up to the house early every morning, and I'll hire you to black my shoes. I'll give—let me see—thirty cents a week."

"Thank you, but I couldn't come up to your house. Bring them down to mine every morning, and I may accept the job."

"Do you think I would demean myself by carrying dirty shoes round the village?" demanded Philip, angrily.

"I don't know," said Harry, coolly. "You'll have to do it, if you want me to black them."

Philip muttered something about impudence, but went off very well pleased, to report to his mother that she could trade at Mead's once more, as he had sent off Harry Gilbert.

## CHAPTER VI

## UNCLE OBED ARRIVES FROM ILLINOIS

It seemed odd to Harry to enter Mead's store, where he had been employed, merely as a customer.

Mr. Mead nodded pleasantly.

"It seems natural to see you here, Harry," he said. "Have you been berrying?"

"Yes, and I would like to sell my berries."

"Very well. You know what I pay—eight cents a quart."

"I have four quarts."

"Measure them out yourself, Harry. I will make an exception in your case, if you wish it, and give you the money for them."

Harry accepted this offer, as he did not know of what groceries his mother stood in need.

As he walked out of the store, he felt more confidence than he had done in the morning. He had not got a place, to be sure, but he had earned thirty-two cents. This was not quite half what he had been accustomed to earn at the store, but it was something.

A little way from the store, Harry passed an old man, dressed neatly, but in a well-worn suit, walking with some difficulty, with the help of a stout cane. He looked to be seventy years old, at least, and his appearance indicated that he was poor.

As Harry passed, the old man called out:

"Stop a minute, boy!"

Harry stopped, and waited respectfully to learn what the old man wanted. It is a common complaint that most boys are wanting in respect to old age, but this charge could not be brought against Harry, who was uniformly courteous to all persons older than himself.

Though he suspected the old man to be very poor, it made no difference to him.

"Can you tell me where Mr. Ross lives?" asked the stranger.

"Yes, sir. I suppose you mean Colonel Ross?"

"I believe that's what they call him. His wife is my niece."

Harry was very much surprised to hear this.

"Have you ever been there before, sir?" asked Harry.

"No; I've been living out in Illinoy. But I'm getting old, and my only daughter died last month. So I've come here to visit my niece."

"I don't believe Mrs. Ross will be very glad to see her uncle," thought Harry; "and I'm sure Philip won't."

"I will show you the way, sir, if you wish," said Harry, politely.

"I wish you would, if it isn't too much trouble," said the old man.

"Oh, no trouble at all," said Harry.

"You seem to be a very obliging boy. What is your name?"

"Harry Gilbert."

"Are your parents living?"

"My mother is living, but my father's dead—that is, we expect he is. He was a sea captain, and never came back from his last voyage."

"Did he leave your mother well off?" asked the old man, gazing attentively at Harry.

Harry thought him rather inquisitive for a stranger, but credited him with good motives, and answered, readily:

"No, sir; we are quite poor; but I have had a place where I earned four dollars a week—at the grocery store. Mr. Mead had a nephew come last week, and now I am out of work."

"That is unlucky for you."

"Yes, sir; but I shall try hard to get something else soon."

"You look like an industrious boy."

"I like to work."

"Where do you live?"

It so happened that Harry's house could be

pointed out across the fields, though at least a quarter of a mile away.

"There it is," he said, pointing it out; "but, perhaps, you cannot see so far?"

"Oh, yes, I can see it."

By this time they had reached the gate of Colonel Ross, and Harry felt that he might safely leave the old man.

Out on the lawn was Philip Ross, who, with surprise and displeasure, saw Harry opening the gate for one whom he mentally designated as an old tramp.

"What do you want here?" he asked, in a tone far from courteous or respectful.

"What is your name?" asked the old man, fixing his glance on the questioner.

"My name is Philip Ross, and I am the son of Colonel Ross," answered Philip, with an air of consequence.

"Then I am your great-uncle, Philip," said the old man, surveying his young kinsman with an interest inspired by the feeling of relationship.

"My great-uncle," repeated Philip, in mingled bewilderment and dismay.

"Yes, Philip, I'm your mother's uncle, come all the way from Illinoy to visit you."

Harry was amused to see upon the face of his young antagonist a look of stupefaction.

It was a severe blow to Philip, especially in

Harry's presence, to be claimed as a kinsman by a shabby, old tramp. It was upon his tongue to express a doubt as to the relationship, but he forbore.

"Is your mother at home?" asked the old man.

"You can ring the bell and see," answered Philip, deliberately turning his back and walking off.

The old man looked after him, with a shrewd glance of intelligence, but expressed no opinion of him.

"Harry," he said, turning to his young guide, "will you come with me to the door and ring the bell?"

Harry complied with his request.

The door was opened by a servant, who, on seeing the old man, said, pertly:

"We've got nothing for the likes of you," and was about to close the door on the two.

"Stop!" said Harry, in a commanding voice, for he was provoked with the girl's ill manners. "Tell Mrs. Ross that her uncle is here. I think you'd better invite him in."

"Well, I never!" said the girl, abashed. "I hope you'll excuse me, sir. Walk into the parlor, and I'll tell Mrs. Ross you are here."

"Won't you come in, Harry?" asked the old man, who seemed to have taken a liking to his young guide.

"No, thank you, sir. I shall see you again, if you are going to stay in the village."

"Thank you! you're a good boy," and the old man began to fumble in his pocket.

"Oh, no. I can't take anything," said Harry, hurriedly.

Even if the old man had been rich, he would have declined compensation—much more when he looked very poor.

"Well, well! I'm much obliged to you, all the same."

Leaving Harry to find his way home, let us see what sort of reception the old man had from his niece.

Within five minutes Mrs. Ross sailed into the room.

"Why, Lucinda!" said the old man, heartily; it's a long time since I met you."

"I do not remember ever having seen you," said Mrs. Ross, frigidly.

"I haven't seen you since you were a little girl, for I've been living away out in Illinoy. I'm your Uncle Obed—Obed Wilkins—brother of your mother."

"Indeed!" said Mrs. Ross, coldly, eyeing the old man's shabby attire with something like disdain. "You must be an old man!"

"Seventy-two, Lucinda. I was born in October, while your mother was two years younger than I, and born in August. I didn't think to outlive her, seeing she was younger, but I have."

"I think it was imprudent in a man of your age coming so far," said Mrs. Ross.

"I was all alone, Lucinda. My daughter died last spring, and I wanted to be near some one that was akin to me, so I've come to see the only relations I've got left on earth."

"That's very cool," thought Mrs. Ross. "He expects us to support him, I suppose. He looks as poor as poverty. He ought to have gone to the poorhouse in his old home."

To be sure, she would not like to have had it known that she had an uncle in the poorhouse; but, so far away as Illinois, it would not have been known to any of her Eastern friends, and wouldn't matter so much.

"I will speak to Colonel Ross about it, Mr. Wilkins," she said, coldly. "You can stay to supper, and see him then."

"Don't call me Mr. Wilkins. I'm your Uncle Obed," said the old man.

"You may be my uncle, but I am not sufficiently acquainted with you yet for that," she answered. "You can come upstairs, if you feel tired, and lie down till supper time."

"Thank you, I will," said Uncle Obed.

The offer of Mrs. Ross was dictated not so much by kindness as by the desire to get her shabby uncle well out of the way, and have a chance for a private



conference with her husband, whom she expected every minute.

If the unannounced visit of Uncle Obed may be thought to need an excuse, it can easily be found. For years, when Mrs. Ross was a girl, she and her mother were mainly supported by the now despised uncle, without whom they might have become dependent upon charity.

It was not a time that Mrs. Ross, in her present luxury, liked to think about, and for years she had not communicated with the uncle to whom she owed so much.

Full of charity himself, he was unconscious of her lack of gratitude, and supposed that her failure to write was owing to lack of time. He had come in good faith, when bereft of his daughter, to renew acquaintance with his niece, never dreaming how unwelcome he would be. Philip's rudeness impressed him unpleasantly, but, then, the boy had never seen him before, and that was some excuse.

## CHAPTER VII

## AN UNWELCOME GUEST

"I DON'T believe that old tramp's my great-uncle," said Philip Ross to himself, but he felt uneasy, nevertheless.

It hurt his pride to think that he should have such a shabby relation, and he resolved to ascertain by inquiry from his mother whether there were any grounds for the old man's claim.

He came into the house just after Uncle Obed had been shown upstairs by the servant, not to the spare room, but to a small, inconvenient bedroom on the third floor, next to the one occupied by the two servants.

"Mother," asked Philip, "is it really true?"

"Is what really true?"

"That that shabby old man is any relation of ours?"

"I don't know with certainty," answered his mother. "He says he is, but I shouldn't have known him."

"Did you have any uncle in Illinois?"

"Yes, I believe so," Mrs. Ross admitted, reluctantly.

"You always said you were of a high family," said Philip, reproachfully.

Mrs. Ross blushed, for she did not like to admit that her pretensions to both were baseless. She was not willing to admit it now, even to Philip.

"It is true," she replied, in some embarrassment; "but there's always a black sheep in every flock."

Poor Obed! To be called a black sheep—a hard-working, steady-going man as he had been all his life.

"But my mother's brother, Obed, strange to say, was always rustic and uncouth, and so he was sent out to Illinois to be a farmer. We thought that the best place for him—that he would live and die there; but now, in the most vexatious manner in the world, he turns up here."

"He isn't going to stay here, is he?" asked Philip, in dismay.

"No; we must get rid of him some way. I must say it was a very cool proceeding to come here without an invitation, expecting us to support him."

This was a gratuitous assumption on the part of Mrs. Ross.

"I suppose he's very poor. He doesn't look as if he had a cent. I presume he is destitute, and expects us to take care of him."

"You'd better send him packing, mother."

"I suppose we shall have to do something for him," said Mrs. Ross, in a tone of disgust. "I shall advise your father to buy a ticket for him, and send him back to Illinois."

"That'll be the best way, mother. Start him off to-morrow, if you can."

"I won't keep him long, you may be sure of that."

By this time Colonel Ross had reached home, and his wife communicated to him the unwelcome intelligence of Uncle Obed's arrival, and advised him as to the course she thought best to pursue.

"Poor old man!" said the colonel, with more consideration than his wife or son possessed. "I suppose he felt solitary out there."

"That isn't our lookout," said Mrs. Ross, impatiently. "It's right enough to say poor old man. He looks as poor as poverty. He'll be better off in Illinois."

"Perhaps you are right, but I wouldn't like to send him off empty-handed. I'll buy his ticket, and give him fifty dollars, so that he need not suffer."

"It seems to me that is too much. Twenty dollars, or ten, would be liberal."

The cold-hearted woman seemed to forget the years during which her uncle had virtually supported her.

"No, Lucinda; I shall give him fifty."

"You should think of your son, Colonel Ross,"

said his wife. "Don't impoverish him by your foolish generosity."

Colonel Ross shrugged his shoulders.

"Philip will have all the money that will be good for him," he said.

"Very well; as you please. Only get him off as soon as you can. It is mortifying to me to have such a looking old man here claiming relationship to me."

"He is your uncle, Lucinda, and you must mention the plan to him."

"Very well."

It was a task which Mrs. Ross did not shrink from, for she had no fear of hurting the feelings of Uncle Obed, or, rather, she did not care whether he chose to feel hurt or not.

Uncle Obed was called down to supper, and took his seat at the handsome tea table, with its silver service. Colonel Ross, to his credit be it said, received his wife's uncle much more cordially than his own niece had done, and caused Uncle Obed's face to beam with pleasure.

"Railly, Lucinda," said Uncle Obed, as he looked over the table, "you have a very comfortable home, I declare."

"Yes, we try to have things comfortable around us," answered Mrs. Ross, coldly.

"Years ago, when you and your mother lived out

in Illinoy, I didn't think you'd come to live in a house like this."

"Yes, people live in an outlandish way out there," said Mrs. Ross.

"But they have happy homes. When Mary lived, I enjoyed life, though the old farmhouse seemed rough and plain, compared with your handsome home. I'm glad to see my sister's child living so well, with all the comforts that money can buy."

The old man's tone was hearty, and there was a smile of genuine pleasure on his rugged face. He was forced to admit that his niece was not as cordial as he hoped, but, then, "Lucinda was always reserved and quiet-like," he said to himself, and so excused her.

It must be said for Colonel Ross that he knew comparatively little about his wife's early life, and didn't dream of the large obligations she was under to Uncle Obed. He was a rich man, and the consciousness of wealth led him to assume airs of importance, but he was not as cold or heartless as his wife, and would have insisted on his wife's treating her uncle better had he known the past. Even as it was, he was much more gracious and affable than Mrs. Ross to the old man, whom he had never seen before.

As for Philip, he was a second edition of his mother, and never addressed a word to Uncle

Obed. When the latter spoke to him, he answered in monosyllables.

"Nancy, you may leave the room. I'll call you if I want you."

This was what Mrs. Ross said to the servant, fearing that Uncle Obed might refer to her early poverty, and that the girl might talk about it in the neighborhood.

Though Colonel Ross made conversation easy for him, Uncle Obed could not help feeling the coldness of his niece.

"Lucindy might treat me better," he thought, "after what I did for her in her early days. But I see how it is; she's ashamed of them, and I won't say anything to make her feel bad. I see I must look elsewhere for a home. Lucindy don't want me here, and I shouldn't feel at home myself. I wish Philip was more like that Harry Gilbert, who showed me the way here."

Supper was over, and Philip took up his hat to go out.

"Philip," said his father, "you forget that your uncle is here. You should stay to keep him company."

"I've got an engagement," said Philip, alarmed at the suggestion.

"Can't you put it off?"

"Let the boy keep his engagement," said Uncle

Obed. "I like to see young people particular about keeping their appointments."

"Your uncle may like to walk out with you, and see something of the village."

Philip looked dismayed at the prospect of being seen in the company of the rather shabby old man, who claimed to be his great-uncle.

"No, no," said Uncle Obed. "I can find the way round by myself. A man that's used to the Western prairies doesn't get lost easily."

Philip breathed a sigh of relief. For the first time he began to think that Uncle Obed had some sensible ideas.

Uncle Obed took his hat and cane, and walked out slowly, making his way along the principal street.

"I wish I could see that boy Harry Gilbert," he thought to himself—for a new plan had occurred to him. "Why, bless me, there he is now," he said, as our hero turned the next corner.

"Good-evening, sir," said Harry, cheerfully.

"Good-evening, Harry. You're just the one I was wanting to see. I've got something to say to you."

What Uncle Obed had to say was of importance, but must be deferred to the next chapter.



## CHAPTER VIII

## UNCLE OBED MAKES A PROPOSAL

HARRY waited to hear what the old man had to say.

"How do you and my grandnephew hitch horses?" asked Uncle Obed.

"You mean how do we get along together?" asked Harry.

"Yes."

"Well, we are not bosom friends. Philip thinks I am a poor, working boy, and looks down on me accordingly."

"It don't do you a mite of harm to work. I had to work when I was a boy, and I've done my share of work since I got to be a man."

"I like to work," said Harry. "I only wish I had the chance."

"So there is no love lost between you and Philip?"

"No; he doesn't suit me any better than I suit him. He's got too high notions for me."

"He's like his mother," said Uncle Obed. "I

reckon she and Philip ain't very glad to see me. It's different with the colonel. He's a nice man, but he seems to be under his wife's thumb."

Harry did not reply. It was only what he expected, from what he knew of Mrs. Ross and her son.

"I hope it won't be unpleasant for you," said he, in a tone of sympathy.

"It's a kind of disappointment," the old man admitted. "I was hoping Lucindy would be like her mother, and I could have a home with my own folks the rest of my life."

"Poor man," thought Harry. "He's old and destitute, and it must be a trial for him to find himself so coldly received."

"I wish," he said, impulsively, "we were richer."

"Why?" asked Uncle Obed.

"Because we'd offer you a home. But, unfortunately," continued Harry, with a sigh, "we don't know how we are to pay our own expenses."

The old man looked gratified.

"I wish you were my nephew, instead of Philip," he said. "You've got a good mother, I take it."

"She's one of the best mothers in the world," said Harry, earnestly.

"I might have known it. Such boys as you always have good mothers. Supposing I was able to pay my share of the expenses, do you think your mother would give me a home?"

"I am sure she would," said Harry, who could not help feeling interest in the homely, but good-hearted, old man. "But I thought——" here he hesitated.

"You thought I was destitute, didn't you?" asked Uncle Obed, with a smile.

"Yes, sir."

"I'm thankful to Providence that I'm not. I've got enough to pay my way for the few years that remain to me. My niece might treat me different if she knew it, but I'd rather she'd think I was in need."

"Shall I speak to my mother about your coming?" asked Harry.

"Yes; but I won't come just yet. I want to see how Lucindy'll act. She wants to get rid of me, and she'll be saying something soon. Like as not, she'll offer to pay my fare back to Illinoy," and the shrewd old man, who had hit the truth, laughed.

"Very well, sir, I'll speak to mother. We've got a nice room that we've kept for a spare chamber, where I'm sure you'd be comfortable."

"I don't much care now what Lucindy says or does," said the old man, cheerfully. "If Philip won't have me for a great-uncle, I'll have to adopt you in his place, and I guess I'll make a good exchange."

"Thank you, sir. I shall try to treat you as a nephew ought. Good-evening."

"That's a good boy," said Uncle Obed to himself. "I wish he was my nephew. Somehow, that stuck-up Philip, with his high-and-mighty airs, doesn't seem at all kin to me."

Harry went home in excellent spirits. It would be of advantage to them to have a boarder, as it would give them a steady, even if small, income.

"I wonder what he'll be able to pay?" he said to himself. "If he pays as much as I used to get—four dollars a week—it'll make us all right, for I'm sure of earning as much as two dollars a week, even if I don't get a place."

His mother brightened up, too, when Harry told her of the prospect that opened up of making up for his lost wages. It was a timely help, and both mother and son regarded it as such.

## CHAPTER IX

## NOTICE TO QUIT

“STRIKE while the iron’s hot!” This was the motto of Mrs. Ross, especially in a matter of this kind. She was firmly resolved to get rid of Uncle Obed as soon as she could.

She had always claimed to be of high family, and to have been brought up in the same style in which she was now living, and here was a witness who could disprove all she had said.

No one knew better than Uncle Obed that she had been very poor in her early days, for it was he who, out of his small means, had contributed to support her mother and herself. Any day he might refer to those years of poverty; and Mrs. Ross felt that she should expire of mortification if her servants should hear of them. Farewell, then, to her aristocratic claims, for she knew well enough that they would be ready enough to spread the report, which would soon reach the ears of all her acquaintances. By way of precaution she took an oppor-

tunity of presenting her version of the story to Nancy, who waited on the table.

"Mr. Wilkins is rather a strange old man, Nancy," she said, affably, as Nancy was clearing off the breakfast table the next morning.

"Is he really your uncle, mum?" asked Nancy.

Mrs. Ross wished she could deny it, but felt that she would be found out in falsehood.

"Yes, Nancy, I confess that he is. There is a black sheep in every family, and poor Uncle Obed was the black sheep in ours."

"You don't say so, mum! He seems harmless enough."

"Oh, yes. There's no harm in him; but he's so rustic. Poor grandpa tried to polish him by sending him to expensive schools, but it was no use. He took no interest in books, and wouldn't go to college"—Uncle Obed would have opened his eyes if he had heard this—"and so grandpa bought him a farm, and set him up in business as a farmer. He was rather shiftless, and preferred the company of his farm laborers to going into the fashionable society the rest of the family moved in; and so all his life he has been nothing but a rough, unrefined farmer."

"What a pity, mum."

"Yes, it is a pity, but I suppose it was in him. Of course, it is very mortifying to me to have him

come here—so different as he is from the rest of us. I am sure you can understand that, Nancy.”

“Oh, yes, mum.”

“He won’t feel at home among us, and I think I shall ask Colonel Ross to pay his fare back to Illinois, and give him a pension, if he really needs it. I dare say he has lost his farm, and is destitute, for he never knew how to take care of money.”

“That would be very kind of you and the colonel, mum,” said Nancy, who didn’t believe half her mistress was saying, but thought it might be for her interest to pretend she did.

“By the way, Nancy, I think I shall not need any more the mantilla you like so well. You can have it, if you like.”

“Oh, thank you, mum,” exclaimed Nancy, in surprise.

For she had never before received a present from her mistress, who was well known to be mean and penurious.

The mantilla was a handsome one, and she thanked Mrs. Ross effusively.

“There, I’ve managed her,” thought Mrs. Ross, “though at the expense of the valuable mantilla. I grudge it to her, but it is best to guard her against any of Uncle Obed’s stories, at any cost. I must get rid of him as soon as I can.”

Colonel Ross wished his wife to postpone speaking for a week, but this she was unwilling to prom-

ise. She agreed to let her uncle stay a week, but insisted on giving him notice to quit sooner.

On the morning of the third day she found her opportunity. Breakfast was over, and she left alone with the old man.

"Mr. Wilkins," she said, "I want to have a talk with you."

"Certainly, Lucindy, you can talk just as much as you please. But what makes you call me Mr. Wilkins? When you were a little girl, and came over with a message from your mother, it was always Uncle Obed."

"It is so long since I have seen you that I hardly feel like speaking so familiarly," said Mrs. Ross.

"You'll feel better acquainted after a while, Lucindy."

"That shows he expects to stay a long time," thought Mrs. Ross.

"Don't you think you made a mistake in leaving Illinois?" asked Mrs. Ross, point-blank.

"Well, perhaps I did," admitted Uncle Obed.

"Of course you did. You are too old to come to a new place where you don't know anybody. Now, out there you knew——"

"Pretty nigh everybody."

"Exactly."

"But out there I hadn't any relations left. After my poor Mary died I felt lonesome."



## THE

"Still, as you hadn't seen me, we are almost the same as before."

"I can't forget, Lucindy, how your mother struggled along, and how she helped——"

"We won't recall those old times," said Ross, impatiently. "I was going to tell you I wouldn't be happy here. We don't do the things we were accustomed to do; and, in fact, it is so inconvenient for us to have a new inmate whose health is delicate, and——"

"You look pretty rugged, Lucindy."

"Appearances are deceitful," said Mrs. Ross, nodding her head solemnly. "I am very nervous, and all excitement is bad for me."

"I hope I haven't excited you, Lucindy," said Uncle Obed. "I thought I was pretty quiet. Now, to the work, you've got two girls to help in the kitchen."

"Yes; but there's a certain amount of care that falls upon me which you can't understand."

"I hope you won't alter your living for me, Lucindy. I'm one of your own folks, and I'll mind a picked-up dinner now and then."

"The ridiculous old man," thought Mrs. Ross, impatiently. "As if I'd alter my style of living for a destitute old man that looks as if he'd escaped from an almshouse."

## BOX

the same, company or no  
y.

age for fashionable visitors  
Philadelphia, it is hardly like-  
a."

"I can't give you any trouble."

replied Mrs. Ross, "it is worrying to  
have company."

"I shouldn't think you'd invite those fash-  
ionable people from New York and Philadelphia,"

Uncle Obed, slyly.

"I shall take him!" thought Mrs. Ross; "won't

you? I shall have to speak more plainly.

"I said she," said she, "I was surprised you should  
bring them upon us without writing, or inquiring  
if it would be convenient for us to receive

them," said Uncle Obed. "I  
will come here."

"Well, you can stay a few days, if you desire it,"

replied Mrs. Ross, "but you will be much happier in  
your home than here."

"I am not," said he, "I am the best judge of that, Lucindy,"

said the old man, with dignity.

"I am not," said he, "I am the best judge of that, Lucindy,"  
said the old man, with dignity.

"I am not; but I am going to try the experi-  
ment here a while."

"I have already told you that it will not be con-

venient for you to stay here. Colonel Ross will pay your fare back to Illinois, and that, I am sure, is quite as much as he ought to do."

"Lucindy," said Uncle Obed, "you seem to have forgotten the years I freely helped you and your poor mother. However, if you don't care to remember them, I won't refer to them."

Mrs. Ross had the grace to be ashamed, but was not moved in her resolution to get rid of her uncle.

"Of course," she said, "I don't forget the past. We will help pay your board in some town at a distance."

"Why at a distance?"

"Because, if you were here, people might think it strange you didn't stay with us, and my health won't admit that."

"I'm much obliged for your offer, Lucindy, but I prefer to make my own arrangements. I am going to stay here."

"Then we shall not assist you," said Mrs. Ross, angrily.

"I don't wish you to. I can manage to pay my board, and I have already selected a boarding place."

"Where do you expect to board?" asked Mrs. Ross, curiously.

"I'll tell you when it's settled."

The next day Uncle Obed informed his niece that he was to board with Mrs. Gilbert. This was

unwelcome news, because it would be a help to a family she disliked; but Uncle Obed was proof against any insinuations she was able to bring against Harry and his mother, and the day after he transferred himself to the clean and airy chamber in Mrs. Gilbert's cottage.

"This will just suit me," said the old man, looking about him with a pleased expression. "I like this room much better than the one my niece gave me."

"Our house won't compare with hers, Mr. Wilkins," said the widow.

"It ain't so fine, but she put me in a little seven-by-nine chamber, and I was always used to plenty of room."

"I am afraid our living will be too plain for you," suggested Mrs. Gilbert, apprehensively.

"Do I look as if I was used to high living?" asked Uncle Obed. "No; whatever's good enough for you and Harry is good enough for me. And now it's best to agree about terms, so that we may know just how we stand."

This was rather embarrassing to the widow. Uncle Obed certainly did not look as if he could pay much, yet it would not do to charge too little. She would not be able to provide her table.

"Would four dollars suit you?" she asked, in a hesitating way.

"No, it wouldn't," said the old man.

"I don't see how I can afford to ask less," faltered Mrs. Gilbert.

"That isn't the point," he said. "You don't ask enough. I will pay you six dollars a week—the first week in advance."

"I should never think of asking so much," said Mrs. Gilbert, amazed. "Are you sure——"

"That I can afford to pay so much?" asked Uncle Obed, who understood her thought. "Yes; I have a little something, though you might not think it from my clothes. When my trunk comes—I left it at a hotel in New York—I will dress a little better; but I wanted to try an experiment with my niece, Mrs. Ross. Here's the money for the first week."

And, drawing out a large wallet, he took therefrom two bills—a five and a one.

"It will make me feel very easy," said Mrs. Gilbert, gratefully, "even if Harry doesn't get any regular work, though I hope he will."

"I should like to warn you of one thing," said Uncle Obed. "Don't let people know how much board I pay. If Mrs. Ross chooses to think I am very poor, let her. She won't pester me with hypocritical attentions, which I shouldn't value."

Harry was delighted at his mother's good fortune in obtaining so valuable a boarder. Six dollars a week would go a long way in their little household.

It gave him fresh courage in his efforts to obtain a place, for he knew that, even if it was deferred, his mother would not suffer from the delay.

## CHAPTER X

## PHILIP MEETS HIS MATCH

THOUGH it would have been possible for the Gilberts to get along now without help from Harry's earnings, his desire to obtain employment was quite as great as before.

As he had no place in view, he continued to go to the berry field every day, supplying his mother with what she needed, and disposing of the rest to Mr. Mead.

The field in which he had at first picked being nearly exhausted, he bent his steps in another direction, where he learned that there was still a good supply. The field belonged to a Mr. Hammond, a substantial farmer, who had no objections to the berries being picked, but required parties to obtain his permission.

As Mr. Hammond was understood to be very well to do, Mrs. Ross and her son condescended to associate with him and his family on equal terms.

On the particular morning when Harry sought the field, Philip was crossing the pasture on his

way to a river, where he kept a rowboat, when he espied two children, Tommy and Rose Perkins, picking berries.

They were children of eight and ten, and it occurred to Philip that he had a fine chance to bully them, in the name of Mr. Hammond.

Striding up to them, with an air of authority, he said:

"Look here, you children, what business have you in this field?"

"It isn't yours, is it?" asked Tommy, independently.

"It belongs to my friend, Mr. Hammond," said Philip. "He don't allow all the loafers in town here."

"Tommy and I are not loafers," said Rose.

"All the same, you are trespassing on Mr. Hammond's pasture. Come, clear out."

"Mr. Hammond gave us leave to come here, and I don't see what business it is of yours," said Tommy.

"I don't believe he gave you permission at all, and I'll let you know what business it is of mine, you little rascal," said Philip, in a bullying tone.

Luckily for Tommy and Rose, there was a friend near at hand, who was not disposed to see them abused. Harry Gilbert had reached the bars between the berry pasture and the next field in time



to hear Philip's attempt to bully the young brother and sister.

"Just like Philip," he thought, with a feeling of disgust. "He is always trying to bully those younger than himself, especially if they are poor."

Tommy and Rose were the children of a widow, no better off than Mrs. Gilbert, and Harry felt a greater sympathy for them on that account.

Meanwhile, Philip, not aware that there was help at hand, continued his persecutions.

"Well, are you going to clear out?" he demanded, in a threatening tone.

"No," said Tommy. "Mr. Hammond said we might pick berries here, and you have no right to touch us."

"I'll show you whether I have or not," said Philip, in his most dominating tone.

He drew back his foot, and deliberately kicked over the children's pails, one after the other. Probably there was not more than a pint in either pail, as the children had just commenced picking, but it was certainly aggravating.

Rose began to cry, while Tommy, his face turning red, said:

"I wish I was big enough; I'd make you sorry for what you have done."

"I see I shall have to give you a lesson," said Philip. "I'll teach you to be impudent to me."

He advanced toward Tommy in a threatening manner, and Harry thought it time to interfere.

"Don't touch that boy, you contemptible bully!" he exclaimed, indignantly, hurrying to the scene of conflict.

"Oh, Harry, make him stop," exclaimed Tommy, in joyful tones.

"I will," said Harry, resolutely.

Philip Ross was very much annoyed by the unexpected arrival of Harry, whom he had never been able to intimidate, and would gladly have slunk away if pride had not hindered.

"You'd better take care what you say," he rejoined, in a surly tone.

"And you had better take care what you do," returned Harry, manfully. "Why have you been interfering with these poor children?"

"I am not responsible to you for what I do," said Philip, angrily. "They are trespassing on this field, and I ordered them off."

"By what right? You don't own it."

"My friend, Mr. Hammond, does."

Here Tommy explained that Mr. Hammond had given them permission to pick berries.

"I don't believe it," said Philip, "and I've no doubt you are trespassing, too."

"Perhaps you'd like to serve me the same way," suggested Harry.

"I'll leave Mr. Hammond to kick you out himself."

"That is more prudent. Stop! where are you going?" for Philip was starting to leave them.

"I don't like the company I'm in. I'm going to leave you to enjoy each other's society."

"Not yet," said Harry.

"Can't you spare me?" sneered Philip.

"Not till you have picked up the berries you have upset."

"Do you mean to insult me?" demanded Philip, angrily.

"No; I am only demanding what is reasonable and right. You upset the berries, and it is only fair you should pick them up."

"Pick them up yourself!" said Philip.

Again he started away, but Harry planted himself resolutely in his path.

"You must pick up those berries or fight me," he said.

"Keep away from me, you beggar!" screamed Philip.

"Once more, will you pick up those berries?"

"No, I won't!"

Harry's only answer was to seize Philip round the middle, and, despite his struggles, to lay him down on the ground.

"You'll suffer for this!" said Philip, almost screaming with rage.

"You can go now," said Harry, contemptuously, "and take care how you interfere with Tommy and Rose again."

Philip rose from the ground, angry and humiliated, yet not daring to attack Harry, whom he knew to be his superior in strength.

"You haven't heard the last of this," he said, shaking his fist.

Harry deigned no reply, and Philip, instead of keeping on his way to the river, turned and walked homeward.

Harry helped the children pick up their berries, and remained with them through the forenoon.

## CHAPTER XI

## THE TWO CONSPIRATORS

PHILIP thirsted for revenge upon Harry, but it did not seem very clear in what way it was to be obtained. The trouble was that Harry was always in the right in all the difficulties they had had, and was likely to have popular sympathy on his side.

As Philip walked home, fuming with anger, it occurred to him to make a formal complaint against Harry before a justice of the peace. But the examination which would ensue would disclose his unjustifiable conduct in the berry field, and he reluctantly abandoned the idea.

While in this state of mind he met a recent acquaintance, some three years older than himself, named James Congreve.

Congreve was boarding at the village hotel, with apparently no business on hand more pressing than smoking, fishing and lounging about the village.

He came from the city of Brooklyn, and had

been sent to this quiet village to remove him from the temptations of the city.

He had been in several business positions, but had given satisfaction in none, and, so far as usefulness was concerned, was perhaps as well off here as anywhere else.

As James Congreve wore good clothes, and had a showy gold watch and chain, which indicated worldly prosperity, Philip was glad to make his acquaintance, for Congreve taught him to smoke and play cards for money.

So when the two met James Congreve asked, languidly:

"What are you up to, Philip?"

"Not much," answered Philip, suddenly.

"You look out of sorts."

"Oh, I've just had a fight with a boy in the berry pasture."

"I hope you didn't hurt him much," said Congreve, smiling.

"No; but I'd like to," replied Philip, spitefully.

"Who is the villain?"

"Harry Gilbert, a low, impudent upstart."

"Yes, I know; used to be in the grocery store, didn't he?"

"Yes."

"What's he done now?"

"Oh, it's too long a story to tell. He was impu-

dent to me, that's all. I would like to annoy him in some way."

"Get him into a scrape, eh?"

"Yes."

"Perhaps we can think of some way. If you haven't anything better to do, come up to my room and play cards."

"I don't mind."

Soon afterward the two were sitting at a small table in Congreve's bedroom at the hotel, playing poker.

This is essentially a gambling game, and for that reason it was a special favorite with James Congreve. He was much more than a match for Philip, whom he had initiated into the mysteries of the game.

"How much do I owe you, Congreve?" asked Philip, as they sat down to their unprofitable employment.

"I don't know, exactly; I've got an account somewhere," answered Congreve, carelessly.

"It must be as much as ten dollars," said Philip, rather uneasily. "Somehow, you always have more luck at the cards than I do."

"Luck will change in time. Besides, I am in no hurry for the money."

"I only wish an allowance of two dollars a week. Father will only give me half of it, and mother

makes up the rest. So it would take five weeks to pay you, and leave me without a cent to spend."

"Probably you won't have to pay it at all. You may win it all back to-day."

Thus encouraged, Philip began to play, but was as unlucky as usual. He rose from the table owing Congreve five dollars more than when he sat down.

"Just my luck!" ejaculated Philip, with a long face. "Just look up the account and let me know what it all amounts to."

Congreve made a little calculation, and announced, in apparent surprise, that Philip owed him twenty-two dollars.

"It can't be!" ejaculated Philip, in dismay.

"There's no doubt about it," said Congreve. "However, don't trouble yourself about it. I can wait. And now for your affair with this Gilbert boy. I've got an idea that I may prove serviceable to you."

During the next fifteen minutes a wicked plot was devised, of which it was intended that Harry should be the victim. The particulars must be reserved for the next chapter.



## CHAPTER XII

## AN UNEXPECTED INVITATION

"COME here, will you!"

Harry Gilbert turned around, for the call was evidently addressed to him, and saw, standing on the piazza of the hotel, James Congreve.

"Come here a moment. I want to speak to you," said Congreve, taking from his mouth the cigar he was smoking.

Harry was surprised. He had scarcely any acquaintance with Congreve, whom he knew chiefly as a companion of Philip Ross. Hitherto he had taken no notice of Harry—a circumstance not regretted by our hero, who had not formed a favorable opinion of the young man.

"Do you wish to speak to me?" he asked, politely.

"Yes," said James, blandly. "May I offer you a cigar?"

"Thank you, I don't smoke," returned Harry, with increased surprise at Congreve's friendly tone.

"It's a bad habit; I dare say you are right," said Congreve gladly. "I mean to break off soon. But what I wanted to ask you was: Do you know your way about the Pegan Hill Woods?"

"Yes; I've been there often."

"Then you are just the companion I want. I am thinking of exploring them with my gun. I suppose I am likely to find some birds?"

"Oh, yes; it's a good place for a sportsman."

"Suppose you come with me. We can have a pleasant afternoon."

Harry hesitated. He did not wish to be dis-obliging, nor did he wish to sacrifice the afternoon. As he did not specially fancy Congreve, he did not expect any pleasure from his company, though the young man seemed disposed to be cordial. This Harry explained to himself by Congreve's desire to secure his services as a guide, and, therefore, did not feel much flattered.

James Congreve noticed and understood his hesitation.

"Of course," he said, "I do not wish to take up your time without compensation. I will pay you fifty cents for your services."

This put a different face on the matter. Fifty cents was very good pay for an afternoon's work, and Harry at once decided that he could not let slip so good an opportunity.

"If you think my company will be worth that

to you," he said, "I am quite willing. How long do you want to stay?"

"I intend to return in time for supper."

"Then it won't be necessary to go home and tell my mother where I am going."

"Oh, dear, no! You will be back before she has time to miss you."

"When do you want to go?"

"At once. I will go in and get my gun and be with you in a moment."

"Unexpected things seem to happen to me pretty often," thought Harry. "I never expected we should have an uncle of Mrs. Ross as a boarder, and here is Philip's intimate friend hiring me as a guide. Somehow, my destiny seems to be closely connected with Philip's, though we are about as far from being friends as any two boys can be."

"Is any one going with you?" asked Harry when Congreve came out of the hotel with his gun.

"No one except you."

"I don't know where Philip is this afternoon," said Congreve carelessly.

Harry rather wondered whether Philip and his companion had had a quarrel. It would not have surprised him very much, for Philip was quite in the habit of quarreling with his associates.

"How far is it to the edge of the woods?" asked Congreve.

"About a mile and a half."

"Quite a good distance. However, it's early, and we shall have time enough."

Part of their course lay through the fields and meadows.

As they neared the woods, suddenly Congreve said, in a tone of well-counterfeited surprise:

"Why, there is Philip Ross sitting on a rock! I wonder what brought him here? Hello, Philip!"

## CHAPTER XIII

## THREE YOUNG SPORTSMEN,

PHILIP turned and surveyed the newcomers in apparent surprise.

"Are you out gunning?" he asked.

"Yes. I have secured a guide, as you see, fearing I might get lost in the woods. I believe you know him?"

"I have that honor," said Philip, superciliously.

This was so much in Philip's ordinary style that Harry did not dream there was any collusion between them, and that Philip was here by appointment.

"You haven't explained how you happen to be here," said Congreve.

"I? Oh, I had a little headache, and I thought I would take a walk in the fresh air."

"Won't you join us?" asked Congreve.

"I don't know," said Philip, irresolutely.

Harry, supposing his indecision might spring from a dislike to his presence, here spoke up:

"Perhaps you won't want me any longer, as you have met Philip."

"Oh, yes I do. He may not care to stay with me all the afternoon, as he has a headache."

"Probably I shan't be with you more than half an hour," said Philip. "I'll walk a little way into the wood."

"Come along, then."

So the three passed into the woods together, Congreve in the middle, with Philip on one side and Harry on the other.

Philip and Congreve engaged in conversation, the latter apparently forgetting that he had a gun on his shoulder. Harry, however, remembered that he was guide to a sportsman, and kept on the lookout for birds.

"Hush! There's a partridge," he said, touching Congreve's arm and pointing to the bird.

James Congreve quickly brought his gun to rest and fired. He had very little skill, however, and the startled bird flew away, in less danger than if the gun had been in the hands of Harry.

"I didn't have time to take aim," said Congreve, apologetically. "Can you shoot?"

"A little," answered Harry, modestly.

"If I had had the gun the bird wouldn't have got away," said Philip, boastfully.

"Take it, then," said Congreve.

"All right!"

So Philip took the gun and began to look out for birds.

He soon had an opportunity to show his skill. A bird was seen flying slowly through the air.

"There's your chance, Phil!" said Congreve, quickly.

Philip raised the gun awkwardly, and it went off in quite a different direction from the one contemplated. But, as luck would have it, a foolish crow got in the way just at the critical moment, and received the charge meant for another object.

"There; do you see that?" exclaimed Philip, triumphantly.

"You don't mean to say you intended to shoot that crow?" asked Congreve.

"Of course I did!" answered Philip shortly, determined to get the credit of his success.

Harry could not help smiling.

"What are you laughing at?" demanded Philip, scowling.

"At the mistake I made," answered Harry, good-humoredly. "I thought you were firing at the partridge."

"You see you were mistaken," said Philip, offensively.

"I see I was," returned Harry, quietly.

He thought it was foolish to get angry about such a trifle.

"Go and get the crow," said Philip, arrogantly.

It had fallen among some underbrush not far away.

"Shall I?" asked Harry, turning to Congreve, whom he recognized as his employer, and the only one entitled to order him about.

"What do you want it for, Philip?" asked Congreve. "It's only a crow—good for nothing."

"Never mind; I want it," answered Philip.

In truth, it was the first bird he had ever succeeded in shooting, though he would not have been willing to acknowledge this, and he wanted to display it at home as a trophy of his skill.

"Then you may get it," said Congreve, who, in spite of his dishonorable character, was, in manners, more of a gentleman than Philip.

Harry at once plunged into the thicket, and not without difficulty succeeded in finding the crow, which he brought out and delivered to Philip. The latter only consented to carry it on account of the pride he felt in his success as a sportsman.

"Here, take this gun, Gilbert, and try your luck next," said Congreve.

"I suppose he will eclipse us all," Philip remarked, with a sneer.

"I don't know about that," returned Harry, good-naturedly. "I haven't been out many times, not having any gun of my own."

"Look out that you don't shoot either of us," said Philip.



"I am not after such game as that," said Harry.

He took the gun, and began to look attentively in different directions, lest any chance should escape him. At length he espied a partridge. He raised his gun quickly, took instant but accurate aim, and fired. The bird was seen to flutter an instant and then fall.

"You've got him!" exclaimed Congreve, excitedly.

Harry ran in the direction of the bird's fall, and returned, flushed with success. Philip's envy was aroused, inasmuch as a partridge was a more valuable prize than a crow.

"You were lucky," he said, with his usual sneer. "It was fortunate for you that the bird got in the way."

"Rather unfortunate for the partridge, though!" said Harry, coolly.

"It wouldn't happen once in fifty times," continued Philip.

"This isn't the first partridge I've shot," answered Harry, quietly.

"Oh, I don't doubt you're a first-class gunner."

"I have great doubts on that subject myself," said Harry.

"You've both of you succeeded, while I shall have to go home empty-handed," said Congreve, who had no particular ambition to shine as a sportsman.

"You'll have a chance soon to try again," said Harry.

By this time they had penetrated a considerable distance into the wood, and Philip grew impatient to carry out the plan which, from the first, they had had in view.

"Isn't it about time?" he asked, significantly.

"Just as you say," replied Congreve, indifferently.

As he spoke he drew from his pocket a ball of strong cord, and both boys—if Congreve can be called one—looked significantly at our hero.

"What's coming?" thought Harry, perplexed. He found out soon enough.

## CHAPTER XIV

## WHAT HAPPENED TO HARRY IN THE WOOD

"I HAVE a little matter of business with you, Gilbert," said Congreve.

"Business!" repeated Harry, looking from James Congreve, with his cool, deliberate manner, to the face of his companion, who was openly exultant. "I don't understand you."

"You'll understand better in five minutes," said Philip.

"I hope so, for I am quite in the dark now."

"The fact is, Gilbert," commenced Congreve, in the cool, deliberate tone habitual to him—for he seldom allowed himself to get excited—"my friend Philip, here, feels that you have treated him badly——"

"Outrageously!" interrupted Philip.

"Very well; let us say outrageously."

"In what way have I treated him outrageously?" demanded Harry, undauntedly.

"Plenty of times," answered Philip, excitedly. "Didn't you attack me in the berry pasture?"

"Yes, and you know why. You were abusing two young children."

"It was none of your business," said Philip, shortly.

"It will always be my business," said Harry, boldly, "when I see a large bully abusing two un-offending children."

"Quite a modern Don Quixote, upon my word," said Congreve, but not in the sneering tone Philip was accustomed to adopt.

He never sneered, and never showed excitement. but he was none the less dangerous on that account.

"Don Quixote was a gentleman, though a foolish one," returned Harry, who understood the allusion.

"That is where he had the advantage of you," observed Philip.

"A very neat hit, upon my word, Philip," said Congreve. "Really, you are improving."

Philip was flattered by this compliment, and looked as if he had quite overwhelmed Harry with his sarcasm.

"However," continued Congreve, "we had better proceed to business. Philip feels aggrieved, and he expects satisfaction."

"Are we to fight a duel?" thought Harry, who did not in the least comprehend what was coming.

"What sort of satisfaction?" he asked.

"You'll see!" said Philip, triumphantly.

Congreve, who was standing beside Harry, handed the ball of cord to Philip, saying:

"I will hold him, while you tie his hands and feet."

"What!" exclaimed Harry, starting.

"We propose to tie you hand and foot and leave you here," said Congreve, coolly. "It will subject you to some inconvenience, and you may have to remain here all night; but it will teach you not to interfere with my friend Philip again."

"Is that what you invited me to come out here for?" asked Harry.

"Yes."

"Pretending to need my services as a guide?"

"My dear fellow, there was no pretense about that. We selected this wood as well adapted for our purpose, and, as I was not familiar with the locality, I thought it best for all reasons to hire you to guide me."

"So I have walked into a trap, and lost my time in the bargain," said Harry, bitterly.

"Oh, no; you haven't lost your time. I agreed to pay you fifty cents, didn't I?"

"Yes."

"Well, here it is. I generally fulfil my contracts."

Congreve drew from his pocket two silver quarters, and handed them to Harry with a bow.

"That's right, isn't it?" he asked.

"Yes," said Harry, mentally deciding that James Congreve was the queerest fellow he had ever met.

"Good! You can't complain of any violation of contract. Now, will you remain quiet while I tie you, or must we use force?"

"Wait a minute!" said Harry, deciding to try the effect of an appeal to Congreve, who appeared to have some sense of honor. "I think you don't understand what passed between Philip and myself. Let me explain."

"No, thank you. It would only be wasting your time," said Congreve, with a languid wave of his hand. "I quite understand that Philip here was playing the bully——"

"What! Do you mean to insult me?" asked Philip, hastily.

"Oh, no; I am only stating facts. Philip, then, was bullying two children, when you stepped in and knocked him down."

"I deny it!" said Philip, flushing.

"Then where's the injury you want satisfaction for?" asked Congreve.

"Do you take the part of a bully, then?" asked Harry, puzzled.

"Yes; for the bully happens to be my friend, and I stand by my friends, right or wrong. Accordingly, I propose to leave you here, tied hand

and foot, for a few hours, or until you succeed in getting loose. It will be soothing to the feelings of my friend Philip, and will give you time to reflect upon your mistake in attacking the son of a rich man."

"But," urged Harry, "I might have to stay here all night!"

"Quite possible! Fortunately, however, there are no wild beasts prowling about in this forest, and you won't incur any danger."

"But my mother will be worried about me."

"I am sorry for that, but it won't be for long."

Harry started to run, feeling that he must avoid the fate that threatened him, if possible; but Congreve overtook him almost instantly, and, passing his lithe, strong arms around him, pinioned him so firmly that he could not escape. He was several inches taller than our hero, and, naturally, much stronger.

"Now, Philip," he said.

Philip advanced to tie Harry, but the latter, feeling that resistance was useless, turning to Congreve, said:

"If I must be tied, you may do it. I won't resist."

"Come, that's sensible," said Congreve, and proceeded to tie Harry hand and foot, as he had proposed.

When the task was completed he took him up

and set him down in such a way that he could lean his back against a tree.

"That will do," he said. "If you don't get free before, I will come to-morrow morning and release you."

"I would like to give him a licking now!" growled Philip.

"That would be cowardly," said Congreve. "Come away and leave him."

Rather reluctantly, for he wanted to stay and triumph over his helpless rival, Philip followed his companion out of the wood.



## CHAPTER XV

## PHILIP'S BAD ADVISER

PHILIP was elated by his triumph over Harry. Being cowardly by nature, he felt that it would be a terrible thing to stay in the lonely wood all night, and he naturally thought that Harry would look upon it in the same light.

He felt that it would pay off all old scores, and leave the advantage with him. But there was a drop of bitterness mingled with his exultation.

James Congreve had called him a bully to his face, and in the presence of Harry, and this seemed to him a personal insult. He was not willing to let it pass, and was resolved to give Congreve to understand that the offense must not be repeated.

"Well, Philip," said Congreve, "our plan has succeeded."

"Yes," answered Philip, shortly.

"What's the matter? Aren't you satisfied yet?"

"Yes, as far as that goes; but I don't like the way you spoke to me."

"Go ahead! Let me know what it is you complain of."

"You called me a bully!"

"You are one, you know," said Congreve, frankly.

"No, I don't know it; and, what is more, I don't like to have any one speak of me in that way!" returned Philip, irritably.

"Very likely not. People don't generally like to have their faults alluded to."

"I tell you I am not a bully!"

"You are mistaken. You would bully me if I were a small boy and not your superior in strength."

"At any rate, if you are my friend, you ought not to talk of me in that way," said Philip, thinking it politic to change his tone.

"You want me to shut my eyes to your real character, then?"

"I don't want you to talk of me in an insulting manner."

"Not at all, my dear fellow. I said you were a bully, and so you are. I meant no offense. The sons of rich men are sometimes puffed up with the idea of their own importance, and your father is a rich man, at least for a country place."

"He is a rich man for any place," said Philip, boastfully.

"I am glad to hear it, especially as it will make

it easier for you to pay me the trifling sum you owe me."

"Trifling sum!" ejaculated Philip. "You said it amounted to over twenty-two dollars."

"So it does; but that is a trifling sum for the son of a very rich man. Some persons would charge you for the little service I have done this afternoon, but that I only did at the bidding of friendship."

"It was very kind of you," said Philip, uncomfortably; "but you mustn't think because my father is rich I have plenty of money. The fact is, he is very stingy with me, and if it wasn't for my mother I would only have a dollar a week."

"It is very considerate of the old man, to be sure. You ought to have five dollars a week."

"So I ought. If I only had I would be able to pay you up in a short time."

"Why don't you suggest to your paternal relative to enlarge the supplies?" suggested Congreve, knocking off the ashes from his cigar.

"I have," answered Philip, "and he always says that a dollar a week is enough for a boy of my age."

"Parents are apt to have limited ideas on such subjects. That was the case with my father."

"What did you do?"

"Do? I borrowed from him."

"How could you do that? Was he willing?"

"He didn't know it."

"Didn't know that you borrowed money of him?"

"No. You are an only child, are you not?"

"Yes."

"So am I. You will be sole heir to your father's property, won't you?"

"Of course," answered Philip, 'with an air of consequence.

"Then, really, the property may be considered yours now—at least in part."

"I suppose so."

"That's the way I look at it. Well, I happened to know where my father kept his government bonds, and I borrowed one."

"Wasn't that stealing?" asked Philip.

"It would have been if the bond had belonged to a stranger, but, as it was likely to be mine some day, of course, that made it different."

"What did your father say?" asked Philip, anxiously.

"Oh, he made a fuss; but the bond wasn't registered, and he hadn't a memorandum of the number, so he couldn't do anything. I sold it through a friend, and while the money lasted I was in clover."

"My father has got some government bonds," said Philip; "but I shouldn't dare to take one, although, as you say, they will be mine some day."

"Suppose your father did find it out—which is not at all likely—you are his son, and you could tell him plainly that your small allowance compelled you to do it."

"I shouldn't know how to dispose of the bond, if I did take one."

"Oh, I would manage that for you! That is the only thing there would be any risk about; but you are a friend of mine."

"Yes, I know you are a good friend," said foolish Philip, who, it is needless to say, could hardly have had a worse enemy than the one who offered him such bad advice.

"So I am, but I don't take any credit for that," answered wily Congreve. "People are apt to deceive themselves about such things, you know, as a son's appropriating what really belongs to him; but I know the world better than you, and understand how to look at things."

"It may be as you say," said Philip, growing nervous at the idea of robbing his father, "but I don't think I like the plan."

"Oh, very well; I only suggested it for your good," said Congreve, preparing to draw the net around his victim.

"If you have any other way of paying me the twenty-three dollars you owe me, it's all the same to me."

"But I thought," said Philip, in alarm, "that

you were in no hurry about it. You said I might win it back."

"So you may, and probably will; but if you don't you ought to pay it."

"I will, sometime."

"I really should be glad if I could wait till then, but, as it happens, I have pressing need of the money."

"But if I can't pay it?"

"Then I shall feel obliged to call on your father, and ask him to pay me."

"You wouldn't do that!" said Philip, panic-stricken.

"I shall feel obliged to. It is only a trifle, and he will probably pay it, giving you a little lecture, perhaps, but nothing worse."

"You don't know him," said Philip, uncomfortably. "He will be awful mad. He had a cousin who was a gambler, and he has often warned me against gambling."

"I don't approve of gambling myself," said Congreve; "but there is a difference between that and a little stake on a game of cards to make it interesting."

"I don't think father would see any difference," suggested Philip, who did not himself understand what difference there could be.

It is hardly necessary to say to my young readers that common sense is the best teacher in such

matters, and that no difference appears to common sense between gambling at cards and gambling in any other form.

"Oh, well, you know best about that. Then it would be better that I shouldn't say anything to the old man?"

"No; don't say anything to him about it," said Philip, eagerly.

"I won't—that is, if you pay me the money in three days."

"But how can I do it?" asked Philip, in fresh dismay.

"Put a bond in my hands, then, and I will dispose of it and give you the balance. You only owe me twenty-three dollars, and a fifty-dollar bond would leave you a handsome surplus. If it were a hundred-dollar bond it would be all the better. Think of having seventy-five dollars or more at your command."

The prospect was tantalizing, but Philip still felt afraid to appropriate one of his father's bonds. If it had been a fear of doing wrong, I should be glad to say so, but it was more a fear of consequences.

"After all," he said, "perhaps I may win it back, and then there won't be any need of raising money. You said you would give me the chance."

"So I will. You can come to my room now, if you like, and try your luck."

So Philip went, like a fly into the spider's parlor, and the natural result followed.

When he left the hotel he had increased his debt to forty dollars, and the prospect looked darker than ever.

As he walked home, it is doubtful if he did not feel more uncomfortable than our unfortunate hero, whom we left, bound hand and foot, in Pegan Hill Wood.



## CHAPTER XVI

## BOUND HAND AND FOOT

THOUGH Harry was a courageous boy, his heart sank within him when he found himself left alone in the wood, bound hand and foot.

Pegan Hill Woods were of considerable extent. In length they extended about three miles, while in width they ranged from a mile and a half to two miles.

Probably the party had penetrated nearly a mile into the wood, and the tree against which Harry was leaning was not far from the center of the wood. The constrained position in which he was sitting became, after a while, somewhat painful. The cords, too, chafed his flesh.

Of course, Harry thought of the possibility of escape. If he could only unloose the cords he could readily find his way home, reaching there before anxiety or alarm was excited by his absence.

He set to work upon his task, but found, to his disappointment, that he had been too securely bound to make this attempt feasible.

The cord was tied again and again in so hard

a knot that, even if he had had the use of both of his hands, he would have found it a work of time to undo them. But when, in addition, his hands were tied, it became well-nigh impossible.

He worked until he was tired, and rested, feeling that thus far he had really accomplished nothing.

"Philip is about the meanest boy I know of," he thought to himself, bitterly. "I suppose he is triumphing over me, as he has a right to do, for he has got me into a very awkward scrape."

This consideration was not likely to make him any less uncomfortable, for Harry had his share of human nature. From Philip his mind reverted to James Congreve. The more he thought of Congreve, the less he could understand him. He was certainly a much more gentlemanly boy—or, rather, young man—than Philip, and our hero disliked him less, though it was Congreve who had tied him.

"He told Philip to his face that he was a bully, and as much as said that I had served him right in doing what I did in defense of the two children. I don't see how he can be a friend of Philip."

Harry had not much knowledge of the world, however, and would have been surprised to hear that Congreve was more dangerous and unscrupulous, and altogether bad, than Philip himself, in spite of the latter's unamiable traits.

After a while Harry made another attempt to loosen the cords; but the second time proved as unsuccessful as the first.

Considerable time had passed—how much he did not know—but, from the direction in which the sun glanced in the wood, he concluded that it was as late as six o'clock, and by this time he was almost always at home.

Indeed, supper must now be ready, and his mother and their boarder, Uncle Obed, were probably ready to sit down to the table, and only waiting for him. It was certainly very tantalizing to be lying there helpless, knowing that his mother would soon be anxious and troubled about him.

"If I could only use my knife," thought Harry. "I would make short work of these cords."

He had a knife in his pocket. If a boy has only twenty-five cents in his pocket, he is sure to spend it for some kind of a knife, or he must be very different from the average boy.

So, of course, Harry was provided with a knife—a good, strong jackknife—but, for all the good it was likely to do him, it might as well have been at home. His hands being tied, of course, he could not get the knife out of his pocket; and, even if he had done so, how could he make use of it?

"I never knew twine was so strong before," thought poor Harry, ruefully, after a third unsuccessful attempt to get free.

He lay a while longer, getting more and more hopeless of an early release. By this time his appetite began to assert itself. He had not eaten a very hearty dinner, and naturally felt all the more hungry now.

He began to think wistfully of the good bread and butter and slices of cold meat and pie which his mother was wont to provide for the evening meal, and some twinges of excusable envy were felt, as he pictured James Congreve and Philip, who had brought this trouble upon him, sitting down at a well-covered supper table, eating as heartily as if they had not left a victim in the woods, helpless and hungry.

"I suppose I shall have to stay here all night," thought poor Harry, despondently.

In the morning he was confident of being released. James Congreve had promised that he would come and release him, and Harry felt confident that he would do so. Had it depended upon Philip, there would be small chance of it; but it was easy to see that Philip and Congreve were not alike. Of course, this gave him hope, but it was not pleasant to think of a night passed in the dark wood; not that Harry was timid or superstitious—he was neither—but it is hard not to be somewhat affected by gloomy surroundings.

While Harry was occupied with these reflections, suddenly a peculiar sound came to his ears, and,

looking up, he was startled by the sight of a black-snake, at least four feet long, which, with head erect, was gazing intently at him.

Whatever may be the cause of the repulsion that exists between the human race and the snake, it is, at all events, genuine, and Harry shared it.

With distended eyes he gazed at this sleek foe of humankind, and felt a strong desire to throw something at it, or crush it under foot. But, alas! he was able to do neither.

Suppose it should advance upon him, helpless and unable to defend himself, and strike its fangs into his flesh, or curl, with slippery fold, about him! What could he do? The perspiration came out upon his brow, and he made a tremendous effort to get away.

Apparently conscious of his helplessness, the snake remained quietly looking at him, and began, after a pause, to slowly glide toward him.

Harry uttered a shrill cry of alarm, which, I am sure, under the circumstances, was not discreditable to his courage, and his soul was filled with horror and repulsion.

It was a fortunate cry, for it brought help. The sound of flying feet was heard, and an instant later a boy of about his own age came rushing up.

"What's the matter?" he asked.

"Look there!" said Harry, hastily.

"By Jehosophat!" exclaimed the boy, and, ad-

vancing toward the snake, he aimed a blow at his crest with a rough, stout stick which he held in his hand.

The blow fell with good effect. The snake had not yet seen his new adversary, and was taken un-awares. The jagged stick tore his skin, and his head dropped forward, maimed and writhing.

"Follow it up!" cried Harry, in excitement. "Kill him!"

"I'll do it!" said the boy, and he sprang forward to renew his attack.

He found a rock, or, rather, a large stone, close at hand, with which he bruised the serpent's head and killed him.

"Ugh, you ugly beast!" he said, in a tone of disgust, miscalling his victim. But, then, a country boy is hardly expected to be well up in natural history.

"Thank you," said Harry, breathing a sigh of relief.

"Why didn't you kill him yourself?" asked the boy. Then, for the first time, noticing in the indistinct light Harry's condition, he said, in surprise: "What's the matter with you?"

"You see I'm tied."

"Who tied you?"

"That's a long story. Just untie me, there's a good fellow, and I'll tell you."

The boy whipped out a knife from his pocket

and quickly cut the cord. Harry sprang up and stretched his arms and legs.

"It seems good to be free once more," he said.

"But who tied you?"

"Two boys that had a spite against me. At least, one had, and the other was his friend."

"How long have you been lying there?"

"Several hours—I can't tell how long."

"It's a mean trick, anyway."

"So it is; I should have had to stay here all night if you hadn't come along."

"Or if the snake hadn't swallowed you!"

Harry shuddered at the mention of the snake.

"That was the worst of it," he said.

## CHAPTER XVII.

## WHAT HARRY SAW IN THE WOOD

"WHAT is your name?" asked Harry. "I don't remember seeing you before."

"I live on the other side of the wood. My name is Reuben Richardson."

"Richardson?"

"Yes; we only moved here two months since, and I haven't had a chance to get acquainted much. What is your name?"

"Harry Gilbert."

"I suppose you live in the village?"

"Yes. It's lucky for me you came along. There isn't much traveling through the wood. How did you happen to be here?"

"I was exploring a little. I was on my way home when I heard you shout. I guess I must be going now. I have to get up early in the morning, and so I go to bed early."

"Well, good-night, Reuben. Come and see me some day. Anybody will tell you where I live."

"Thank you. If you ever come our way, stop at the farm and see me."



"So I will."

The two boys parted, with friendly good-nights.

"Reuben seems a nice sort of boy," said Harry to himself, as he threaded his way through the woods in a homeward direction. "I don't know what would have happened to me if he hadn't come along."

The moon was already up, though it was still early, and cast a mild radiance through the branches of the trees. The effect was fine, but Harry had no time for enjoying it, as he was in a hurry to get home and relieve his mother's anxiety.

He had gone perhaps a quarter of a mile, when he heard voices, indistinct as yet, of men, who seemed to be approaching.

Ordinarily he would have kept right on, without fear or suspicion, but it might have been the experience through which he had just passed that made him more cautious.

At any rate, he began to look around to see where he could best conceal himself till the newcomers passed.

He caught sight of a tree that seemed easy to climb, and he swung himself up at once, ascending from limb to limb till he was probably twenty-five feet above the ground, concealed by the foliage and the obscurity of night.

He had not long to wait.

Presently there emerged from the thicker recesses of the wood two men, one of whom carried in his hand a tin box of considerable size.

Harry scrutinized them both, but he only recognized one. That one was a man named Ralph Temple, generally considered a ne'er-do-well and a vagabond, who lived in a tumble-down shanty in the edge of the wood.

"This is the place I was thinking of," said Temple, halting about twenty feet from the tree in which Harry was concealed.

"It seems a lonely, out-of-the-way place," said his companion.

"Yes; no one is likely to see the box here. No one ever comes here. There is a path through the wood, which is always used by those who pass through it."

"And this is off from the path?"

"Yes."

"Where do you think it best to hide the box?"

"Under that tree will be a good place; say ten feet from it, in an easterly direction."

"East and west are all alike to me here; I can't tell the difference."

"I can; and so could you, with a compass."

"Shall you know the place again?"

"Yes; do you notice that mark on the bark of the tree? It was struck by lightning once, but that was all the harm done to it."

"Good! That will serve to identify it. But why couldn't we have concealed it nearer your cabin?"

"I don't want to fall under suspicion," said Temple, shaking his head.

"Why should you?"

Ralph Temple laughed—a harsh, unpleasant laugh.

"The good people round here haven't a very good opinion of me," he said. "They would be very apt to suspect me, if suspicion came this way. No; it's better to hide the box here."

"I wish we could sell the bonds at once."

"Nearly all are registered, and probably the old man has a record of the rest, so that if we tried to sell them we would be brought up with a round turn. No; as I told you, the only way is to wait till a reward is offered, and then open negotiations for their return. Not immediately, you know. We will keep them long enough to make the owner feel anxious, and willing to get them back at any cost."

"I guess you're right. We must be prudent. If we could only get away with the whole sum it would make us comfortable for a year or two."

"How much is there?"

"Well, there are eight thousand dollars in government bonds, and five Union Pacific bonds of a thousand dollars each. They're safe as governments."

"Thirteen thousand dollars!" said Temple, in a tone of gratification.

"Yes, and more, for the bonds are all at premium. However, we must lay back for a reward. It won't do to negotiate them."

While this conversation had been going on Temple indicated the spot which he thought suitable, and, with a spade which he carried, had commenced excavating a hole sufficiently large for the purpose.

He dug to a depth of about eighteen inches, the box being eight inches in height, and carefully deposited it in the cavity.

Then both replaced a part of the earth, and carried away the remainder to the distance of a hundred feet or so. Finally they brought a quantity of leaves and covered the spot.

"There," said Temple, with a look of satisfaction; "it's safe enough now. It'll take a smart detective to find it, I reckon."

"You're right there, Ralph," said his companion. "It would be a bad sort of joke if we couldn't find it ourselves," he added, after a pause.

"I can find it, never you fear!" said Temple. "I know these woods as well as anybody, and shan't forget the spot."

"All the same, I wish I had some of that money now. I'm almost dead broke."

"So am I; but I can let you have enough to get back to the city."

"And suppose," said Vernon, with an uneasy look, "you should take a fancy to remove that box while I am away?"

"Don't be afraid. Ralph Temple isn't that kind of a man. He'll stand by his pard and treat him fair."

"It would be a rough trick to play on me, Ralph," said Vernon, apparently not quite free from uneasiness.

"So it would; but there is no danger. Even if I did couldn't you expose the whole thing, and have me arrested?"

"So I could," returned Vernon, more reassured by this consideration than by his faith in Temple's fair dealing.

"Well, if you're all ready, we may as well vanish. You can stay with me to-night, and go to the city in the morning. Watch the papers, and see if there is anything that promises advantage to us."

"All right."

The two men moved off, much to Harry's relief. He was in momentary dread of a sneeze, and this would betray his whereabouts to Temple and his partner.

What these two desperate men would have done to him, had they discovered him, it was not easy

to guess; but, under the influence of vexation and alarm, they might have brought upon him worse trouble than any he had yet experienced.

Such, indeed, was likely, from what he knew of Ralph Temple. He was generally considered a disreputable character, and the villagers were ignorant as to how he made his living.

From time to time he came to the village store provided with money; but where it came from no one knew, as he was not known to do anything, except to roam the fields and woods with his gun. Sometimes he disappeared for a week or a fortnight at a time, but where he went, unless to the city, no one knew.

Harry conjectured, from what he had just seen, that Temple was in league with wicked men in the city, with whom he was engaged in violations of the law, and in this surmise he was correct.

He understood a little better now Ralph Temple's object in selecting as his abode this lonely and out-of-the-way place.

Harry did not venture to descend from his elevated perch until the two men had ample time to get beyond sight and hearing.

When he touched the ground, he first scanned the tree and its vicinity carefully, so as to make sure he could find it again, and then hurried home.

## CHAPTER XVIII

## HARRY'S COMMISSION

It may be well imagined that Harry was in a thrill of excitement as he walked home. He had just witnessed what was undoubtedly an attempt to conceal the proceeds of a burglary. He, and he alone, outside of the guilty parties, knew where the booty was deposited, and he asked himself what was his duty under the circumstances.

Of course he had no sympathy with Temple and Vernon. They had made themselves the enemies of society, and he was in duty bound to defeat their criminal plans, if possible, and restore the property to its legal owner or owners.

Here a difficulty stared him in the face. He didn't know to whom the tin box and its contents belonged, for not a word had been dropped by the two thieves which could inform him. They had made up their minds, however, to wait till a reward should be offered, and then come forward and claim it, or, at any rate, open negotiations through others looking to that result.

Why could not Harry learn, in like manner, who



had been robbed, and communicate with them? This seemed to him the most sensible course.

Here, again, there was another difficulty. In the little country village he was not in a position to see any such notice, for they took no daily paper, and, though Mr. Mead did, his inquiry for it would excite curiosity and lead to questionings. It seemed necessary for him to go to New York.

"Shall I tell mother, or not?" he asked himself.

On the whole, he thought it better not to do so. So far as he was concerned, his mother was timid, and she would be anxious lest he should incur the hostility of the two lawless men of whose crime he had come into the knowledge. Yet he wanted to consult somebody, for he felt that the matter was one of no little importance, and that he needed a man's counsel.

"I'll speak to Uncle Obed about it," he said to himself. "He isn't used to cities, to be sure, but he has had a long life, and must have considerable experience. At any rate, he will be better qualified than I to know what ought to be done."

He had scarcely come to this conclusion before he reached the cottage.

His mother, with a troubled expression of countenance, was sitting at the table, not sewing or mending, as usual, but with her hands clasped in her lap, while near her sat Uncle Obed, also looking sober.



"I am sure something has happened to Harry," she had just been saying. "I never knew him to stay out so long without telling me."

"Boys will be boys," answered the old man, not knowing what else to say. "He's gone off on some lark with some of his playmates."

"But he never does that without telling me, Mr. Wilkins. He's always so considerate."

"He'll be coming home safe and sound, depend upon it," said Uncle Obed, with a confidence greater than he actually felt.

"Perhaps he has fallen from a tree—he was always fond of climbing—and broken his leg," suggested Mrs. Gilbert, dolefully.

"He's too smart for that," said Uncle Obed.

"What should I do if he never came home?" exclaimed the poor woman, with a shudder.

Mr. Wilkins was hardly prepared to answer this question, and, luckily, it was not necessary, for just then the latch was lifted and Harry walked in.

"Didn't I tell you so?" said Uncle Obed, triumphantly.

"Oh, Harry, I'm so glad to see you! Where have you been so long?"

"It's lucky you came just as you did," said Mr. Wilkins. "Your mother had made up her mind that you had met with an accident."

"I wanted to come home, but I couldn't," answered Harry. "I was in the woods."

"Lost your way?" asked Uncle Obed.

"Not exactly. Two boys played a trick upon me."

Of course Harry had to explain what sort of a trick it was. Mrs. Gilbert was very indignant, and denounced Philip and his confederate in no sparing terms.

"You ought to go and complain to Colonel Ross," she said. "Philip ought not to be allowed to do such things."

Harry smiled. He had no idea of following this advice. It would have been an acknowledgment of weakness, and he felt able to defend himself against Philip Ross and his machinations.

"Mother," he said, "I've got very particular reasons for not doing this, and for not even mentioning that I was in the wood. Now, I want you to promise me not to say a word about it, for a week at least."

"But if I see Philip," said his mother, "I can't keep silent."

"You must, for my sake, mother. You don't know how much depends upon it."

"I don't understand," said Mrs. Gilbert, thoroughly bewildered.

"No, I suppose not; but I have a strong reason that I can't mention just yet."

"I hope there's nothing wrong going on," said his mother, alarmed.

"If there is, it isn't anything that I'm to blame for. Only there's a secret that I can't tell just yet. You'll know it in good time. I want to consult Uncle Obed to-night about it, and you won't mind if I don't tell you just yet?"

"Give the boy his way, ma'am," said Mr. Wilkins. "If there is anything very bad about it he wouldn't tell me."

His mother was somewhat reassured, and left the two to themselves. Then Harry began and told his story. Mr. Wilkins listened with attention, and not without surprise.

"Really, Harry, it's quite an adventure, I call it," he said. "Do you know this man Temple?"

"I know that he's a sort of tramp. I didn't suppose he was a thief before."

"You never saw this other man before?"

"No; never heard of him."

"They're a pair of rascals, I reckon. Now, what have you thought of doing?"

"Of going to New York to-morrow to find out what I can about the burglary, or whatever else it was. If I can find out who has been robbed, I'll go and tell them about it, and where the bonds are hid."

Uncle Obed nodded approvingly.

"That's a good idea," he said.

"What puzzles me," continued Harry, "is how

to explain to mother why I go to the city. I can't tell her, and she'll feel nervous."

"I can manage that," said Mr. Wilkins. "I'll tell her you have gone on business for me."

"But will it be true?" asked Harry.

"Yes; I've got some cowpons"—that's the way the old man pronounced the word—"that you can get the money for."

"Shall I have any difficulty about it, Uncle Obed?"

"No; you can go to a broker, and he'll give you the money for it, taking out his commission. How much does it cost to go to New York?"

"The price of an excursion ticket is a dollar."

The old man took from his pocket a two-dollar bill.

"There," said he; "that'll pay your ticket and get you some dinner."

"But, Uncle Obed, you ought not to pay my expenses."

"Why not? Ain't you going on my business?"

"I'm going principally on my own," said Harry.

"Well," replied the old man, smiling, "then you must take it because I am your uncle."

"I know I call you so."

"You seem a good deal more kin to me than Philip. He's ashamed of his old uncle, and so is his mother; but you are not."

"No, no, Harry; it's all right. I ain't exactly

poor, but I'd rather my niece would think so. So don't you say anything to them about the cowpons."

"I'm not likely to, Uncle Obed."

The old man went up to his room and brought down ninety dollars' worth of government coupons, which, as gold was then ruling at a dollar and twenty, would bring about a hundred and eight dollars in currency.

Mrs. Gilbert was much surprised when Harry told her that he intended to go to New York the next day on business for Uncle Obed; but, of course, had no idea that he had still more important business of his own.

## CHAPTER XIX.

## A SECOND VISIT TO THE WOOD

THERE was an early train from the neighboring village of Crampton to New York. Harry got up early, and walked the first part of the way through the fields to a point where the footpath struck the main road, three-quarters of a mile from the village.

In this way it happened that he was not seen by any of his companions, and his day's expedition was kept a secret.

Just after breakfast James Congreve received a call at the hotel from Philip.

"Our friend in the wood must be hungry by this time," said James.

"Ho, ho!" laughed Philip, in evident enjoyment. "It's a splendid joke."

"I fancy he doesn't think so," said Congreve, shrugging his shoulders.

"Of course he doesn't. He must have been awfully scared, staying there all night."

"He doesn't strike me as a boy who would easily be frightened."

"At any rate, he must be hungry," said Philip, in a tone of satisfaction. "I guess he'll find it doesn't pay to insult me."

"Well, he's had enough of it; we'll go and release him."

"What for?"

"You don't want him to stay there all day, do you?" demanded Congreve.

"It wouldn't do him any harm," muttered Philip.

"What a mean fellow you are, Philip! You ought to be satisfied with keeping him there all night."

"I wish you wouldn't call me names," said Philip, pettishly.

"Don't deserve them, then. Well, are you coming with me?"

"I don't know; it's a good ways," said Philip, hesitating.

"Just as you like. I am going. I told the boy I would, and I mean to keep my promise."

And James Congreve stepped off the piazza and started.

"Oh, well, I'll go, too. I want to see how he looks," said Philip, and began to laugh.

"Take care how you laugh at him there, Phil, or he may pitch into you."

"You won't let him, will you, James?" said Philip, apprehensively.

"I thought you were a match for him," said Congreve, with an amused smile.

"So I am, but he might take me unawares. He'll be so mad, you know."

"I'll protect you," said Congreve. "Come along."

Both boys would have liked to learn whether Harry had been missed at home, and what was thought of his disappearance; but there seemed to be no one to ask, and, for obvious reasons, they did not care to show any curiosity on the subject.

"I'd like to meet Mr. Wilkins," said Philip. "He boards there, you know, and he might say something about it."

"Mr. Wilkins is your uncle, isn't he?"

"He's a distant relation of ma's," said Philip, reluctantly. "We don't know much about him."

"I suppose he's poor?" suggested Congreve, drily.

"Oh, dear, yes! He was a farmer or something out in Illinois. He probably pays a dollar or two a week board at Gilberts'. They're dreadfully poor, you know. I shouldn't be surprised if all hands were in the poorhouse before the year is out."

"Your uncle and all?"

"He isn't my uncle!" said Philip, snappishly.



"Relative, then. You wouldn't want a relative in the poorhouse?"

"Pa offered to pay his expenses back to Illinois, but the old fellow was obstinate and wouldn't go. I expect he's hanging round here in hopes of getting something out of pa and ma; but it's no use, as he'll find out sooner or later."

"Strange he went to board with the Gilberts, isn't it?"

"Oh, it's a good enough place for a rusty old chap like him. He ain't used to living in any style. Ma says he's half crazy."

By this time they had reached the borders of the wood, and soon they came to the place where Harry had been left bound.

"Why, he isn't here!" exclaimed Philip, in surprise and disappointment.

"So it appears."

"How could he have got away?"

James Congreve, bending over, searched carefully, and at length got some light on the subject.

"Somebody cut the cords," he said. "Look here—and here!" and he pointed out fragments of the strong cord with which the captive had been bound.

"That's so. Do you think he did it himself?" asked Philip, disappointed.

"No; he was too securely tied. I took care of that. Somebody came along and released him."

"I hope he had to stay all night, at any rate," said Philip.

"That we cannot discover at present. One thing is certain—he's free."

"I'm sorry I came," muttered Philip. "I have had this long walk for nothing."

"You haven't had the satisfaction of releasing him, I suppose, you mean?"

"No, I don't. I wanted to see how he looked. It's too bad he got away."

"There's nothing for it but to go back," said Congreve. "You'd better look out for him. He may want to pay you off."

"He'd better not try it," said Philip, but he seemed uneasy at the thought.

On their way back they passed, unconsciously, near the place where the tin box was concealed.

Hovering near the spot was Ralph Temple, uneasy for the safety of the buried treasure.

He eyed the two young fellows with suspicion. They had no guns in their hands, and he could not understand what object they had in coming to this out-of-the-way place so early in the morning.

"What are you about here?" he demanded, roughly.

Philip was frightened and turned pale; but James Congreve only surveyed the man curiously, and said:

"Is that any business of yours, my friend?"

"You'll find out whether it's any business of mine," returned Temple, angrily.

"That's precisely what I would like to find out," said Congreve, coolly. "You accost us as if you were the owner of the wood, which, I take it, you are not."

"Do you want me to wring your neck, young man?" said Temple, with a growl.

"Oh, don't make him angry, James!" begged Philip, nervously, laying his hand on Congreve's arm.

James—who certainly was not a coward—surveyed his companion contemptuously.

"Much obliged to you for your kind offer," said he, addressing Temple, "but I must decline it."

"You've got too long a tongue, young man!" said Temple, provoked by the other's coolness. "I've a mind to teach you a lesson."

"When I want one I will let you know," said Congreve, changing his tone and manner and regarding the other scornfully.

"Meanwhile, my man, I advise you not to drink so early in the morning. It doesn't improve your naturally bad manners."

With a muttered exclamation Ralph Temple sprang forward, prepared to handle Congreve roughly, as he was quite able to do, being much his superior in size and strength, but, with his hand

nearly touching the shoulder of the young man, recoiled, as Congreve drew out a revolver and pointed it at him.

"One step further and I fire!" he said, in a calm, collected tone, while Philip stood by, as pale as a sheet.

"Confusion!" exclaimed the ruffian, in mingled amazement and dismay. "Who are you, anyway?"

"My name is James Congreve, at your service," said the owner of that name, bowing. "I regret that I haven't a card about me."

"You're a cool customer!" muttered Temple, surveying Congreve curiously.

"So people tell me. You'll find me at the hotel in the village, if you have any further business with me."

Congreve nodded carelessly and left the spot—Phil, in a very nervous condition, keeping himself somewhat in advance.

"He's a cool chap," muttered the ruffian. "But it's clear he knows nothing of our affair. I was a fool to make a fuss. It might lead to suspicion."

"What a dreadful man!" said Philip, as the two were walking away.

"Do you know him?"

"His name is Ralph Temple. He's a kind of tramp."

"He's an impertinent fellow, at any rate. It's well I had my revolver with me."

They walked back to the village, momentarily expecting to see or hear something of Harry Gilbert; but neither then nor later in the day was their curiosity gratified.

## CHAPTER XX

## ON THE WAY TO NEW YORK

HARRY stepped on board the train without seeing any one whom he knew, and took a seat on the right-hand side. Just in front of him was an elderly farmer, with a face well browned by exposure to the sun and wind. He had a kindly face, and looked sociable. It was not long before he addressed our young hero.

"Going to New York?" he asked.

"Yes, sir."

"Are you acquainted there?"

"No, sir; not much."

"Nor I. I was thinking you might be able to direct me to a place where I could get money for some cowpons."

"Government coupons?" inquired Harry, becoming interested.

"Yes. You see, my wife's uncle died not long ago, and left Sarah a government bond of a thousand dollars, drawing six per cent interest. There's

thirty dollars due the first of this month, and I told Sarah that I'd go and collect it for her."

"I've got some business of that same kind," said Harry. "I was told there were brokers' offices in Wall Street, where I could collect the money without any trouble."

"I'll go with you," said the farmer, in a tone of satisfaction. "If he'll buy yours, he'll buy mine."

"I shall be glad to have your company," said Harry, politely.

It flattered his vanity that a man old enough to be his grandfather was disposed to be guided by him in a matter of such importance.

Just then a smooth voice was heard from the seat behind.

"Gentlemen," said a young man, showily dressed and with a profusion of rings on his fingers, "excuse my interrupting you, but I may be able to save you some trouble."

They naturally waited for an explanation of these words.

"I overheard you saying that you had some coupons to dispose of."

"Yes," replied the farmer, eagerly.

"I am myself a banker and broker, and deal in government securities. If the amount is not too large, I will buy your coupons and pay for them at once."

"That will be handy," said the farmer. "I've got thirty dollars in cowpons."

"And you, my young friend?" said the so-called broker, addressing Harry.

"I have rather more than that," said Harry, in a reserved tone.

Somehow, he was suspicious of the plausible stranger.

"I will pay you a higher price than most houses, besides saving you all the trouble," said the broker, insinuatingly, as he drew out a capacious wallet, and, opening it, exhibited a pile of bills.

The farmer immediately drew out his coupon.

"Let me see," said the broker; "thirty dollars, gold at the present premium comes to thirty-six dollars."

"Thirty-six dollars!" repeated the farmer, complacently. "Sarah'll feel rich when she gets that money."

"Here's your money," said the broker, producing three ten-dollar bills, a five and a one. "The bills are new, you perceive."

The farmer put away the bills in his old wallet, and the stranger slipped the coupon carelessly into his vest pocket.

"Now, my young friend, I am ready to attend to your matter," he said, turning to Harry.

"I won't trouble you," said Harry, coldly; "I prefer to dispose of the coupons in the city."



"Just as you like; but you would do better to deal with me."

"Why?" asked Harry.

"In the city they will allow you but a hundred and nineteen for gold."

"How is it you can afford to do better by me?" asked Harry, shrewdly.

"Our house makes a point of dealing liberally with their customers," said the broker.

"What is the name of your firm?"

"Chase & Atkins," answered the other glibly. "I am a relative of Salmon Chase, ex-secretary of the treasury, and, since, chief justice of the Supreme Court."

"You don't say!" ejaculated the farmer. "Salmon Chase is a great man."

"So he is. Thank you, sir, for your appreciation of my distinguished relative. Of course, it doesn't make me any better to be related to that great man, but I am naturally proud of it."

"Hadn't you better sell your coupons to him?" asked the farmer, who was quite prepossessed in favor of the gentlemanly stranger.

"No, sir; I was instructed to sell in Wall Street, and I prefer to do so."

"Oh, just as you please," said Mr. Chase. "You will lose by it, but that's your affair. Good-morning, gentlemen. I have a friend in the next car."

So saying, he bowed, and left the car.

"Well, my business was easily done," said the farmer.

"Will you allow me to look at the bills he gave you?" asked Harry.

"Sartain! Why?" and the farmer drew out his wallet.

Harry took one of the bills in his hand and examined it carefully, but he was not an expert, and could not judge whether it was good or not.

"Don't you think it's good?" asked the farmer, uneasily.

"I presume it is; but I didn't like the looks of the man you had dealings with."

"He is of good family," said the farmer.

"He says he is," responded Harry, significantly, "and I hope it's all right. We'll wait till the conductor comes along, and ask him about the bills."

Fifteen minutes elapsed, however, before that official made his rounds, and during that time the train stopped at two stations. At one of these Harry's suspicions were increased by seeing that Mr. Chase got out.

At last the conductor appeared, and Harry passed him the bill.

"Is that bill good?" he asked.

The conductor held it up to the light, and shook his head.

"No," he said; "it's one of a quantity of coun-

terfeits that has lately made its appearance. Where did you get it?"

"It belongs to me," said the farmer, his honest countenance exhibiting much distress. "I took it in payment for some cowpons."

"Who gave it to you?"

An explanation was given.

"I noticed the man," said the conductor. "He is a well-known swindler. Have you got any more?"

The others were exhibited. Out of them all the conductor declared that only the one-dollar bill was genuine.

Probably it had not been thought worth while to counterfeit a bill of so low a denomination.

"Oh, what'll Sarah say?" ejaculated the distressed farmer. "What a tarnal fool I've been! She wanted me to buy her a nice dress out of it, and I've only got a dollar left!"

"Perhaps the man may be caught," suggested Harry.

"I don't believe it. Simon Jones, you ain't fit to go around alone. You're as green as—as—a gooseberry!"

Harry pitied him, but was unable to offer any adequate consolation.

"Will you give me your name and address?" he said. "And, if I can hear anything of your cou-

pons, or the man that swindled you, I'll write and let you know."

"Will you? I'm obleeged to you," said the farmer, who had formed quite a high idea of our hero's sagacity from his declining the trap into which he himself had fallen. "My name is Simon Jones, of Crabtree Hollow, Connecticut."

Harry entered it in a little memorandum book which he carried.

At length the great city was reached, and the crowd of passengers dispersed in different directions.

It was over a year since Harry had been in the city, and he was not very familiar with it, but he had a modest confidence in his ability to get along.

"Shine yer boots, guv'nor?" asked a ragged bootblack.

"How much?" Harry asked.

"Seein' it's you, I'll only ask ten cents," returned the street boy.

"Thank you. I blacked my own boots before I left home."

"Do you call that a shine?" said the boy, contemptuously, as his glance rested on Harry's shoes, which certainly did not vie in polish with those operated upon by city bootblacks.

"It'll do for me," answered Harry, good-naturedly.

"Mornin' papers—*Herald, Times, Tribune, World!*" called a newsboy.

"Give me a *Herald*," said Harry, who suddenly bethought himself of the tin box, and was anxious to find out whether any allusion was made to the theft in the morning papers.

He opened the paper, and his eyes ran hastily over the crowded columns.

## CHAPTER XXI

## A REWARD OFFERED

HARRY looked over the news columns in vain for an account of the robbery, or some allusion to the tin box which he had seen concealed in the wood.

"There may have been something about it in yesterday's paper," he said to himself. "I must go to the office of publication and buy a copy."

It occurred to him, however, that there might be an advertisement offering a reward for its recovery, and he began to search, with this object in view.

Presently his eye lighted on the following:

"Two Hundred and Fifty Dollars Reward.

"On the fifteenth instant, a Tin Box, containing a considerable sum in Five-Twenty Government and Union Pacific Bonds, was stolen from the office of the subscriber. The above sum will be paid for the discovery of the thief, or for information leading to the recovery of all, or the larger part, of the bonds.

JAMES P. WHEELER,

"No. 265 Broadway, Room 10."

I do not claim to have given the correct number, for obvious reasons. Of course, the address given in the advertisement was accurate.

Naturally, Harry was much pleased at his easy success. He had only to go to the office mentioned and communicate what he knew, and leave Mr. Wheeler to take the necessary steps for the recovery of the property.

Should he attend first to that, or to the sale of the coupons? On the whole, he decided to go to Mr. Wheeler's office first, as the tin box might be removed at any time, if the suspicions of Vernon or Temple should be excited.

It was, of course, perfectly easy to find any address on Broadway, and not many minutes elapsed before Harry found himself before the door of office No. 10.

Entering—for the door was ajar—he saw a large, handsomely fitted-up office, with a small room partitioned off at one corner.

In this room sat a man of middle age, with a keen face and a brisk air, which indicated that he was a trained man of business.

Outside, at a desk, sat a young man, evidently a clerk, who was busily engaged in writing. It was he who looked up when Harry entered and looked hesitatingly about.

"Well, Johnny, what can I do for you?" said the young man, patronizingly.

"Is Mr. Wheeler in the office?"

"Yes; but he is busy."

"He will see me," said Harry, with quiet confidence.

"Will he?" asked the young man, surveying our hero with some curiosity. "Who do you come from?"

"From no one. I have business of my own with Mr. Wheeler."

"Who is it?" asked an imperative voice.

"A boy to see you, sir," answered the clerk, respectfully.

"Bring him in, then, and don't waste his time and your own in unnecessary talk."

"Waste his time, indeed," muttered the clerk, who evidently did not regard Harry's time as particularly valuable.

"Well, young man," said the lawyer—for such was his business—as Harry entered his presence. "What is it?"

"I should like a private interview, sir," said Harry, glancing at the clerk, who was hovering near.

"Shut the door, and resume your writing, Richard," said Mr. Wheeler.

Shrugging his shoulders, with a disappointed look, Richard obeyed.

"I came to see you about the advertisement," said Harry, coming to the point at once.



The lawyer started, and eyed Harry keenly. Could the boy be one of the thieves, or was he merely acting as a go-between?

"Do you know anything about the box of bonds?" asked Mr. Wheeler, quickly.

"Yes, sir; I know where it is concealed."

"Ha, that is important. Do you come from the parties that took them?"

Harry colored, and looked indignant.

"No, sir," he answered, with emphasis.

Mr. Wheeler smiled.

"I was bringing no charge against you," he said.

"I thought the guilty parties might have employed you as their agent—their innocent agent. Now, tell me how you come to know anything about the matter."

This Harry proceeded to do. As the story is already familiar to the reader, he shall be spared a repetition of it. It is needless to say that the lawyer listened with earnest attention.

"This is a curious story," he said, "but I see no reason to question its accuracy. I certainly hope it is true."

"It is true, sir."

"Of course, I imply no doubt of your word. Now, tell me, did you see distinctly the faces of the two men who were employed in concealing the box?"

"Yes, sir."

"Should you know them again?"

"I should."

"Did you recognize either?"

"Yes, sir."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the lawyer, who did not expect an affirmative answer. "Who was it?"

"Ralph Temple."

"How did you know him?"

"He lives in a poor cabin just on the outskirts of the wood."

"How long has he lived there?"

"About two years."

"What is his reputation?"

"Very poor. No one knows how he makes his living, though at times he seems to have plenty of money."

"Is he absent a part of his time?"

"Yes, sir; he is sometimes away for a month at a time."

"Probably he is in league with some criminals in the city, and may have an object in living where he does."

"I thought of that, sir."

"Did you recognize the other man?" the lawyer next asked.

"No, sir. It was no one I ever saw before; but I noticed his face well, and should know him again."

"So far, so good. Can you find or lead others to

the place in the wood where the box was concealed?"

"Yes, sir; but I don't think they will leave it there long. Something ought to be done soon."

"Something shall be done. By the way, have you mentioned what you saw to any person?"

"To only one—an old gentleman boarding at my mother's house."

The lawyer looked annoyed.

"I am sorry for that. It may be all over the village before you get back, and, in that case, your information may do no good."

"Don't be afraid, sir. Obed Wilkins can keep a secret."

"Obed Wilkins! Does he come from Illinois?"

"Yes, sir."

"I know him," said the lawyer, smiling. "In fact, he is a client of mine. As you say, he can keep a secret. My boy—by the way, what is your name?"

"Harry Gilbert."

"Very well, Harry, your chance of earning the reward offered is very good."

"I did not come here with any thought of the reward."

"Perhaps not; but the owner can very well afford to pay it, and I advise you to accept it if your information leads to the recovery of the box."

"Doesn't it belong to you, sir?"

"Oh, no. It belongs to one of my clients. It disappeared from my office two days since. The owner is not yet aware of his loss, but I felt authorized to offer the reward. May I count on your further help?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then I shall send you at once with a note to a police officer, requesting two detectives to accompany you back. I shall give them instructions, and they will probably go back with you to the country."

"Very well, sir."

Mr. Wheeler dashed off a few lines, properly addressed them, and handed them to Harry.

"Use all dispatch," he said.

"I will," answered our hero, promptly.

As he left the inner office, the clerk outside regarded him curiously. He was surprised at the long interview accorded him, and wondered what could be his errand.

As Harry descended the stairs, he jostled a man who was ascending, and naturally was led to look at him. Harry came near dropping with sheer surprise. The man he recognized at once as Vernon, one of the men whom he had seen in the wood.

## CHAPTER XXII

## BROUGHT TO BAY

HARRY felt that matters were getting exciting, and a crisis seemed imminent.

"I will hurry as fast as I can," he said. "I suppose he has come about the tin box, too. I hope he will stay till I get back."

Vernon, little dreaming that he was recognized by the office boy—as he took him to be—who had just jostled against him, kept on his way upstairs. His appearance was that of a well-dressed man, not much over thirty, who might be filling a responsible business position in the city. When, therefore, he said to the clerk, "Is Mr. Wheeler in?" he received a more polite reply than had been accorded to Harry fifteen minutes before.

"Mr. Wheeler?" he asked.

"Yes," said the lawyer, with his usual scrutinizing look.

"I should like to speak to you in private, sir."

"Another claimant for the reward," thought the lawyer.

"Very well," he said. "Have the kindness to close the door."

Vernon did so.

"Now," said the lawyer, abruptly, desiring to get through with his interview before Harry's return from his mission.

"You advertised for the recovery of a tin box of valuables?" said Vernon.

"Yes."

"I may be able to assist you in the matter," said Vernon.

"Indeed! Then you know where it is?" said the lawyer, eying him keenly.

"I didn't say that, did I?" asked Vernon, smiling craftily.

"No; but you probably know—that is, if your information is of any value."

"That isn't at all necessary," said Vernon, coolly. "I may say as much as this, however—that I am employed by those who do know the whereabouts of the box."

"Then there was more than one connected with the robbery?"

"Yes," said Vernon, hesitating.

He saw that every word was noted, and afforded a basis for inferences.

"What do your employers authorize you to say?" asked the lawyer, sitting back in his chair.

"That they can lay their hands on the bonds at

short notice, and are ready to return them, if it is made worth their while."

"I suppose you have read my advertisement, Mr. ——"

"Precisely," answered Vernon, not taking the hint and announcing his name.

He might do so soon, but resolved not to be precipitate.

"Then you know what reward we offer."

"It isn't enough," said Vernon, briefly.

"Why not? It seems to me that two hundred and fifty dollars is a very respectable sum of money."

"I shall charge my clients as much as that for my agency," said Vernon, "and they naturally want something for their trouble and risk."

"Do you know how much the box contains?"

"Yes; my clients have told me."

"Do they realize that, if they refuse my offer, they will find considerable trouble in negotiating the bonds?"

"Yes; but they can do it. There are parties who will advance them much more than the reward, and take the risk, holding them till such time as the affair is forgotten."

"What parties?"

"Do you suppose I will tell you that, sir?" asked Vernon, cunningly.

Mr. Wheeler did not, but he was only filling up

the time. He had made up his mind that the man before him was something more than the agent of the thieves, and he now wished to protract the interview till Harry should have had time to return with the two detectives.

"No," he replied, "I can hardly expect you to answer that question. I should like to ask you, however, whether you have had any conversation with your clients about the sum they would consider sufficient to repay them for their 'trouble'?"

"Yes, sir; that subject has come up between us."

"Well?"

"I think, sir, you will have to multiply the reward you offer by ten."

"Whew!" exclaimed the lawyer, who was not at all surprised, however. "This is a large sum."

"It is only about one-sixth the market value of the bonds."

"I don't think my client would consent to pay so large a sum as that."

"Then your client must be prepared to lose the whole amount."

"It appears to me that a thousand dollars would be an adequate, not to say a handsome, reward."

"What would it amount to divided among four persons, after paying me my commission?"

"Then there were four persons engaged in the theft?"



"Better say in the removal of the deposits. It sounds better."

"Call it so, if you like. Doesn't it occur to you that it hardly required as many as four persons to remove the tin box, weighing with its contents, not over two pounds?"

"I suppose one could have lifted it," said Vernon, smiling.

"True; but do you know it is my theory that two persons were engaged?"

Vernon started, and scanned his companion's face anxiously. Did he know anything? That was what he asked himself.

"You can form any theories you please," he said, with a forced smile. "They won't alter facts."

"You are right, Mr. ——"

"You may call me Thompson."

"Very well, Mr. Thompson."

By this time a foot was heard upon the stairs. The door opened, and Harry Gilbert entered.

He came forward, not appearing to notice the visitor, and placed in Mr. Wheeler's hand a scrap of paper, on which he had written in pencil:

"The man with you is one of the robbers. I can identify him. I met him as I was going out. The two detectives are in the entry. I thought it best not to bring them in till I had a chance to tell you this."

Mr. Wheeler's eyes lighted up as he read this scrap, and he looked approvingly at Harry.

"Quite right," he said. Then, turning to Vernon, he continued: "I don't think we can come to terms. I have reason to doubt whether you can carry out your promise and deliver the property."

"I suppose this is a bluff game, intended to deceive me," said Vernon, showing symptoms of anger. "I can assure you that it will do you no good."

"I may find out elsewhere the location of the box."

"Impossible! I, and I alone—that is, outside of the men who employ me—can give you this information. They will follow my advice, whatever it is, and I shall advise them not to surrender the box until they receive an adequate reward."

"Such as the sum you name?"

"Yes."

"Wouldn't two thousand dollars tempt you?" asked the lawyer.

"I think not. Still, I will consult them. I might advise them to accept that sum."

"My dear sir, I don't want to deceive you. I attach very little importance to your information, or your power in this matter. In fact, I have a theory as to the place where the box is concealed."

"Indeed, sir," said Vernon, with a sneer. "May I ask what is your theory?"

"Certainly. I think it is concealed near some country town, in a secluded spot in a wood."

Vernon jumped to his feet in dismay. He was convinced that his confederate had got the start of him and made a bargain with the lawyer, thus anticipating his own treachery, for he had promised Temple that he would suffer some time to elapse before communicating with anyone on the subject.

"Who has been here?" he asked.

"One who saw you and your confederate bury the box," answered the lawyer, sternly.

Without a word, Vernon dashed from the office, only to be seized by the two detectives, who had come provided with handcuffs.

"This is an infamous conspiracy!" declared Vernon, furiously. "If Ralph Temple has betrayed me——"

"Harry," said the lawyer, "do you recognize this man?"

Vernon stared in surprise at the supposed office boy.

"Yes, sir."

"Where did you see him last?"

"In Pegan Hill Wood, in the town of Waybridge."

"What was he doing?"

"Burying a tin box in a hole which he dug for the purpose."

"Who was with him?"

"A man named Ralph Temple."

"What do you say to this, Mr. Thompson?" asked the lawyer.

Vernon turned to Harry.

"Where were you at the time?" he asked.

"In a tree just overhead," answered Harry, undauntedly.

"I was a fool not to look more carefully about me," he said. "What is your name?"

"Harry Gilbert."

"Then, Mr. Harry Gilbert, I owe you a debt which, sooner or later, I shall manage to pay."

"Take him away," said the lawyer to the detectives, "and then come back to me for instructions."

## CHAPTER XXIII

## FINDING THE BOX

"My boy," said the lawyer, turning to Harry, "you have done yourself credit. A grown man could not have shown more judgment."

"Thank you, sir," said Harry, pleased at the compliment.

"But your work is not yet done. As soon as the detectives have returned, you must go back at once to Waybridge with them, and lead them to the place where the box is concealed."

"I am ready, sir," replied Harry. "But," he added, with a sudden thought of one of his errands, "will there be time for me to go to Wall Street first?"

"Why do you want to go to Wall Street?"

"I have some coupons which I am to sell for Mr. Wilkins."

"To what amount?"

"Ninety dollars gold."

"I will myself give you the money for them, as that will save time. Should the search for the box

be successful, I will take upon me to pay you the reward as soon as you desire it."

"Thank you, sir."

Harry might have declined the reward, but he felt, justly, that he had rendered a valuable service to the unknown owner of the bonds, and was entitled to it.

Presently the detectives came back.

"Well," said the lawyer.

"He is safe under lock and key," promptly answered one of them.

"How did he appear?"

"Sullen and despondent. He vows vengeance against this boy."

"Probably he will not be in a position for some years to harm him. And now I have some instructions to give you."

Half an hour later Harry and the two detectives were passengers on a train bound for a town not far from Waybridge. It was a different railroad, however, from the one on which Harry had come. The choice was made from a desire to avoid suspicion.

From a point four miles distant they took a carriage, hired from a stable, which left them on the opposite side of the wood from the one by which Harry had previously entered.

Of course, they could not penetrate the wood with a vehicle, and the question came up:

"Who can be got to look after it?"

Just then Harry saw in a field near-by Reuben Richardson—the boy who had released him from his bonds.

"Reuben!" he called out.

Reuben approached, regarding Harry and his companions with surprise.

"Have you an hour to spare?" asked one of the detectives.

"Yes, sir."

"Then please look after this team, and I'll see that you don't lose your time."

"All right, sir."

Then, free from all anxiety, the three made their way into the forest. The way seemed blind enough to the two detectives, who were, of course, on unfamiliar ground.

"Are you sure you can find the place?" asked one of them, doubtfully, addressing himself to Harry.

"Sure," answered Harry, briefly.

"It seems blind."

"I know the wood well. I have played here from a boy."

"Where does this Temple live?" asked the second detective.

"In the edge of the wood."

"Near here?"

"No, on the other side of the wood."

"It is to be hoped he has not grown distrustful and removed the box."

"I don't think there is any danger of it, sir. Remember, it is only last night that it was concealed. Besides, he wouldn't dare to attempt it in the daytime, when he would be liable to be seen."

"Quite right. You are unusually considerate for a boy."

Harry did not disappoint his companions. He led the way to the place where, the night previous, he had seen the tin box secreted, and instantly pointed out the exact spot where it was concealed.

The two detectives lost no time in searching for it. They had brought no shovel with them, lest, being seen, their object might excite suspicion; but, by means of sticks which they sharpened into stakes with the help of sharp jackknives, they turned up the earth, and, in due time, revealed the box.

"There it is," said Harry, joyfully, for he was also helping, and it was his stake that struck it first.

"So it is," exclaimed the first detective, in a tone of satisfaction.

There was no loss of time in lifting the box from its place of concealment. Then it was thought best to replace the earth, and carefully to cover the place with leaves, so as to hide from the superficial observer the fact that it had been disturbed.

"Our errand is accomplished," said the second



detective. "Now let us make all haste back to our wagon."

"I will guide you," said Harry.

"Do so, or there is no knowing when we shall get back, or whether we shall get back at all. I once lost my way in a wood, and was wandering about four good hours, and all within a radius of two miles, before I got out. It is difficult to keep your direction in a forest, unless you have a compass."

So Harry, who had expected it, served as a guide on the return, and conducted them safely to the wagon.

Reuben was paid for his service with a dollar bill, which he declared he should have considered satisfactory for a whole day's labor.

Harry was about to say good-by to his companions, but they advised him to ride back with them to a point on the road where he could make his way to Waybridge without the trouble of passing through the wood, besides having a less distance to go.

"What time is it?" he asked.

"Two o'clock," answered one of the detectives, consulting his watch.

"Only two o'clock!"

Harry could scarcely believe it, so much had happened since he got up in the morning, yet it was even so. It had taken very little time to do his

business in the city, as we know, and almost half the day still lay before him.

Harry thought of what he had accomplished with pardonable pride and satisfaction. He had frustrated the plans of two daring thieves, caused the arrest of one of them, and the probable speedy arrest of the other, arranged for the restoration to the owner of a valuable property, and earned for himself the munificent sum of two hundred and fifty dollars.

Nothing particular happened on his homeward walk.

"Got home so soon, Harry?" asked Uncle Obed, as our hero entered the little cottage.

"Yes, sir; and here's the money for your coupons."

"How about that other matter, Harry?"

"It came out all right. Where's mother?"

"Gone to call on one of the neighbors."

"Then I'll tell you about it; but I don't want to say a word to mother till the whole thing is settled."

## CHAPTER XXIV

## PHILIP IN A TIGHT PLACE

RALPH TEMPLE was still at his cottage, or, more properly, hut, waiting impatiently for Vernon to reappear, that he might obtain his share of the contents of the tin box.

He had led a lawless life, and more than once been engaged in dishonest transactions, but never in one of such magnitude as the present. He calculated that, even if they surrendered the box in consideration of a reward, he would not receive less than a thousand dollars, and he was planning how he would dispose of this sum.

This was the project which he fixed upon: For years he had been desirous of visiting California, in the hope that chances of getting rich, honestly or dishonestly, might be met with in a State whose very name was suggestive of gold. With a thousand dollars he would feel justified in going. Moreover, there would be an advantage in leaving a part of the country where he was an object of suspicion to the authorities, and was liable at any time to be

arrested for complicity in more than one questionable transaction.

In his lonely hut he knew nothing of the developments in the last robbery—whether any reward had been offered as yet. This was necessarily left in the hands of Vernon, while he remained to guard the hidden treasure.

A state of suspense is all the harder to bear when a man has nothing else to divert his thoughts, and this was the case with Temple.

“What if the box should be discovered?” was the thought that haunted him.

Finally, though he had once before visited the hiding-place of the tin box, he decided to go again, and started at such a time that he arrived about an hour after Harry and the detectives had unearthed and removed it.

Meanwhile, it becomes necessary to state that Philip Ross, whose curiosity was excited by the continued absence of Harry, made up his mind once more to visit the wood to see if he could discover any traces of his victim.

“He’s hiding in the wood so as to make an excitement,” thought Philip. “He’ll make a great fuss about what we did to him.”

In fact, Philip was getting a little anxious about the results of his high-handed treatment of Harry. He was not sure but Harry might have him arrested, and this excited his fears. He admitted to

himself, reluctantly, that tying a boy hand and foot, and leaving him all night in the forest, was rather more than a joke.

He called at the hotel for Congreve, but was told that he had gone to ride.

After a little hesitation, he decided to go to the wood alone, carrying with him, by way of precaution, a stout cane which belonged to his father, to defend himself with in case Harry should be lying in wait and make an attack upon him.

On his way he had occasion to pass by the locality of the hidden treasure, though, of course, he knew nothing about this.

Just at the spot he heard a tramping in the fallen leaves, and, looking up hastily, saw Ralph Temple approaching.

Now, Temple, as we know, was a man of questionable reputation, and, moreover, once already he and Congreve had had an angry altercation with him. It is not much wonder, therefore, that Philip's heart beat with fear at the prospect of meeting this man alone, so far from help.

He could not get away without attracting attention, and, therefore, as the best thing under the circumstances, hid himself behind the broad trunk of a stately oak tree, and in fear and trembling waited for the unwelcome intruder to depart.

Ralph came along, with a quick, swinging gait. He was a tall man, of strong frame, and an unpre-

possessing countenance appropriate enough to his character and reputation.

His first glance was directed toward the spot where he had helped bury the box upon which his future plans depended.

There was something that startled him in the evident displacement of the leaves, as if there had been others there since the morning.

"Can it have been taken?" he asked himself, with a thrill of anxiety.

He strode forward hurriedly, and, removing the leaves, discovered signs of recent disturbance. Most suspicious of all, he found one of the stakes, the end soiled with dirt, which had been used by the detectives.

With a beating heart and a muttered imprecation, he began to dig down to ascertain whether his apprehensions were justified.

Philip, peering from behind the tree, was very much alarmed by this incomprehensible proceeding.

What could the man be doing? Was he insane? He blamed his folly in seeking again this dangerous neighborhood after the encounter of the morning.

"Oh, if I were only safe at home," he mentally ejaculated; "or, if Congreve were with me. If he discovers me he may kill me."

He thought of running away, but in the silence of the forest his steps would undoubtedly be heard, and he would be pursued. So it seemed most pru-

dent to stay where he was. In fear and trembling he continued to watch the dreadful outlaw.

It was not long before Temple made the unwelcome discovery, suspected from the first, that the box was gone. He desisted from his work and gave vent to such a volley of imprecations that Philip trembled as if he had an ague fit.

Could it be, Temple asked himself, that Vernon had proved false to him, and, returning, conveyed away the box for his own individual profit?

"If he has, I'll kill him," he muttered, in a deep, growling tone.

Philip heard him, and his heart beat fast with fear. Who did Temple want to kill? Was it himself or Congreve?

"I'd give a thousand dollars, if I had it, to be at home," thought the miserable boy.

As for Temple, he was no less miserable. All his hopes and anticipations were dashed. The disappearance of the tin box, whoever might have removed it, would render it impossible to carry out plans of Californian emigration with which he had been solacing himself all the morning. Such a big haul as the present might never be made again.

His first suspicion fell upon his partner, but he also thought of the two whom he had met in the forenoon in the wood. They had been suspiciously near the spot, and might be implicated in the loss. It didn't seem probable, but it was possible.



At this inauspicious moment Philip, yielding to a tickling in the throat which he couldn't overcome, coughed. It was not a loud cough, but Temple heard it.

He instantly started for the quarter from which the sound proceeded, and in a few seconds discovered and dragged Philip by the collar from behind the tree.

"What are you doing here?" he demanded, sternly.

"Nothing," answered Philip, trembling.

"Ha! You are one of the boys that I caught prowling round here this morning."

"I have as much right here as you," said Philip, plucking up a little courage.

"Have you? We'll see about that," snarled Temple. "Where's the other fellow?"

"He isn't here."

"Isn't here? I don't believe it. He's hiding somewhere near."

"Then you can find him," said Philip, sullenly.

"No matter! I've got you, you rascal!" And he shook Philip fiercely. "What villainous work have you been up to?"

"I don't know what you mean," said Philip, his teeth chattering. "I am the son of Colonel Ross, and he won't allow me to be treated this way."

"I'd treat him the same way if I caught him here," growled Temple, with a lack of reverence



for the colonel's exalted position, which struck Philip with horror. "Now, tell me what you have done with the tin box, you young scoundrel!"

"The tin box!" ejaculated Philip, in genuine amazement.

"Yes, the tin box. You know well enough what I mean."

"I don't know anything of any tin box; indeed, I don't."

"Do you mean to say you didn't dig it up from the place where we put it?"

"No; indeed I didn't! I don't know anything about it. What was in it?"

Was this ignorance real or affected? Temple could not tell. What was certain was that the box was gone, and this boy was hovering about the spot. It would be folly to let him go.

"I don't believe you," he said, bluntly. "You must come with me."

And he began to drag Philip off in the direction of his hut.

"Oh, where are you taking me?" asked the frightened boy.

"You'll know soon enough. I'm going to keep you till the tin box is restored to me."

Poor Philip! As he was jerked along by his collar, in the stern grasp of the outlaw, he suffered a good deal more than Harry had in his recent captivity.

## CHAPTER XXV

## PHILIP BECOMES A PRISONER

"PLEASE let me go, and I'll give you five dollars," said poor Philip, as he was dragged along the forest path by his captor.

"Humph!" said Temple, grimly, thinking he might as well take the money, though he had no intention of releasing Philip. "Have you got five dollars with you?"

"No."

"Then you are trying to fool me," exclaimed Temple, with an angry jerk at the boy's collar.

"No, I'm not," answered Philip, terrified. "I've got two dollars with me, and I'll bring you the rest before night."

"Where will you get it?"

"From my father."

"And I suppose you expect me to let you go home and get it?"

"If you please."

"But I don't please. You must think I'm a fool. Just as if you would come back if you had once got away!"

"But I will. I promise it on my word of honor."

"Your word of honor," repeated Temple, scornfully. "As if I didn't know what that amounts to."

Philip would have resented this imputation if he had dared, but there was a look of grim resolution about Temple's mouth which made him afraid to show any resentment.

"Besides," added Temple, "what do you think I care for five dollars? After you have stolen thousands of dollars from me, you dare to think I will let you off for five dollars."

There was something in this speech which, despite Philip's terror, attracted his attention. Temple spoke of being robbed of thousands of dollars, yet he was generally considered a poor outlaw. How could he have come into possession of so large a sum?

"Thousands of dollars!" repeated Philip, in undisguised amazement.

"Yes; what have you got to say about it?" demanded Temple, sharply.

"I thought you were poor," Philip couldn't help saying.

Temple paused a moment. He knew that the possession of so much money would excite surprise in others besides Philip, and he regretted his imprudence in speaking of thousands of dollars. As it was done, he must give some kind of an explanation.

"So I was poor; but a rich cousin in New York died lately, and left me a large legacy. Not having any safe to put it in," he added, with a grim smile, "I concealed it in the wood, thinking it would be safe. When I saw you and that friend of yours prowling around this morning, it crossed my mind that it was in danger; but I didn't think you were thieves."

"We are not," said Philip. "We know nothing about your tin box."

"That's all very well to say. What were you doing in the wood just now?"

"I only went there for a walk."

"Of course," said Temple, with a sneer. "It's a pleasant place for a walk, and handy to your house."

"I hope to die if I ain't telling the truth!" said Philip, desperately.

"You'll die when your time comes, and it may come sooner than you think for," said Temple, taking a malicious pleasure in seeing Philip turn pale and tremble in his grasp.

"You wouldn't kill me?" faltered Philip.

"I don't know what I shall do. If you tell me where the box is, I shan't."

"But I don't know—hope to die if I do."

"Who was that fellow with you?" demanded Temple, abruptly.

"James Congreve."

"Where does he come from?"

"From New York."

"If you haven't stolen the box, he has. It lies between you."

"James wouldn't steal it. He is a gentleman."

"So gentlemen don't steal?" sneered Temple. "I am not sure about that. I know one thing. I've lost the box, and one of you has got it."

It occurred to Temple that it was more likely to be Congreve, who was older and bolder than the boy he had captured, but he was not disposed to let Philip go, nevertheless.

Again Philip denied the charge, but this time Temple did not answer.

At length they reached the hut, and entered.

Now came the critical moment. What was this bad man going to do with him? Philip asked himself.

He was dragged into the hut, and then, for the first time, his captor relaxed his grip.

"Sit down there," he said, pointing to a wooden chair, from which the paint had all worn off.

Philip sat down.

"Now, if you dare to stir or try to escape I'll kill you," said Temple, coolly.

"What a blood-thirsty ruffian!" Philip thought, trembling.

Temple opened the door of a closet, which was

filled with a variety of articles, including a small supply of kitchen utensils.

He took out a caseknife, to the horror of poor Philip, who concluded he was to be butchered in cold blood. Still, he did not dare to leave his seat, lest his jailer's threat should be carried into execution. He was happily undeceived, however, for from the floor of the closet Temple lifted a portion of a clothesline, and with some difficulty, for the knife was dull, cut off a portion. Then he turned to Philip.

"I can't stay here to stand guard over you, boy," he said, "but I don't mean that you shall get away in a hurry. I think I have found a way to prevent your escaping."

He approached the boy, and said:

"Hold out your hands."

"What are you going to do to me, Mr. Temple?" asked Philip, nervously.

"Tie you," answered his captor, sententiously. "What do you suppose ropes are made for?"

"Please don't tie me," said Philip, in dismay. "I won't run away."

"No, I don't think you will. Hold out your hands."

There was no help for it. Philip, much against his will, held out his hands, and they were tied tightly around the wrists, so that the stricture was painful.

"It hurts me," he complained.

"It would hurt your neck worse," replied Temple.

Philip understood what he meant, and turned pale. But a ray of hope came to him in his despondency. Even if his hands were tied he might escape, and he resolved to do so as soon as Temple was at a safe distance.

His hands being tied would not prevent his walking or running, and once out of the wood he would feel comparatively safe.

He reckoned without his host, however; or, rather, he reckoned without knowing the intentions of his captor.

"There," said Temple, when the boy's hands were tied, "so far so good! Now for your feet!"

Hope died once more in Philip's breast. He might escape with his hands tied, but with his feet tied it was quite another matter. In vain he protested against this second indignity. His jailor was not to be moved.

"You may as well spare your breath, boy," he said. "I ain't quite a fool. I'm not going to leave you free to get away as soon as my back is turned."

So Philip's feet were tied, too, and he realized how utterly helpless he was.

"There, you can amuse yourself now as much as you like," said Temple, with a humor that Philip

did not by any means appreciate. "You'll have a nice, easy time, with nothing to do."

He turned and left the hut, relieving Philip of his presence, which was one comfort, but did not go very far.

As my readers will conclude, Philip began to work his wrists up and down, vainly endeavoring to unloose the rope, but only succeeded in hurting himself. Next he tried his feet, but they, also, were securely confined.

It was a righteous retribution for the trick he had played on Harry Gilbert. He was being paid off in his own coin. Though his conscience was not particularly sensitive, it did occur to him that he was in precisely the same condition as the boy whom he and Congreve had left alone in the dark wood, fully expecting that he would have to remain all night.

But even then he could not be said to feel deep regret for his unworthy act. He was sensible of the inconvenience to which he was subjected by his constrained position, and began to chafe and fret under it.

"I wonder how long he's going to leave me here?" thought Philip, though, in truth, he hardly knew whether he wanted Temple to return or not. "Just as soon as I get away, I'll ask pa to have him arrested. I wouldn't mind seeing him hung."

An hour passed—about the longest hour Philip



had ever known. At length his eager ears discerned steps outside the hut. It might be a friend! At any rate, he would call, and perhaps the call would bring rescue.

“Hello, there!” he called out. “Come in; I need help!”

## CHAPTER XXVI

## PHILIP IS FORCED TO APOLOGIZE

THERE were two persons outside, one of whom was our hero, Harry Gilbert. The other, though dressed in citizen's clothes, was an officer, who had been sent to arrest Temple, on a charge of being implicated with Vernon in the robbery of the tin box.

Harry at once recognized the voice of Philip, and it is needless to say that he was filled with genuine surprise.

"That must be Philip Ross," he said, in a low voice, to the officer.

"Who is Philip Ross?"

Harry gave a few words of explanation. He did not, however, mention the mean trick which Philip had played on him.

"He is not a friend of Temple?" asked the officer.

"Oh, no! He must have got into some trouble with Temple. Please stay here, and let me go in and see what is the matter. I have a reason for wishing him to think I am alone, just at first."

"Just as you say," returned the officer. "I take it for granted Temple isn't here, or the boy wouldn't have called. Suppose the man comes back?"

"Let him come in, and you can follow. Between us, I guess we can make him a prisoner."

"You have plenty of courage," said the officer. "Are you not afraid to have him come in upon you?"

"Not while you are near to help me," answered Harry. "In the cabin we could pen him up."

"That's true. Well, go in to your friend."

"A queer sort of a friend Philip is," thought Harry, but he did not object to the title.

Opening the cabin door, which Temple had closed, Harry regarded Philip with amazement. He could hardly believe the testimony of his eyes when he saw his enemy, tied hand and foot, very much as he had been the night before.

"What's the matter, Philip?" he asked. "What has happened to you?"

"Can't you see for yourself," demanded Philip, querulously. "I'm tied so tight I can't move."

"Who did it?"

"That thief, Temple! I should like to wring his neck?" said Philip, spitefully.

Though Harry was not a vindictive boy, it did strike him as appropriate that Philip should have a chance to see for himself how it seemed to be

bound. Deferring the gratification of his curiosity, he inquired:

"How do you like it?"

"How do I like it?" echoed Philip, furiously. "Don't ask such absurd questions, but come and untie me."

"Wait a minute," said Harry. "Perhaps you have forgotten that this is the way you and Congreve served me only last night. I suppose you thought it a good joke. Well, Ralph Temple has played the same joke on you."

"Joke!" repeated Philip. "He'll find out what kind of a joke it is when my father has him put in jail."

"Do you think he deserves to be put in jail just for that?"

"Yes, I do."

"Then it seems to me that you and your friend Congreve deserve the same punishment for what you did to me."

"It's entirely different; but stop talking and come and untie me."

"You didn't untie me. You left me to pass the night in the forest alone."

Philip eyed Harry attentively, and it struck him that perhaps it would be better to drop his haughty and domineering tone and temporize a little, if he wanted a rescue. He could afterward treat Harry as he pleased.

"I didn't think you'd make so much of a little matter like that," he said. "It was a mistake. I didn't mean you to stay all night. Congreve promised to go back and untie you. Didn't he do it?"

"No," answered Harry, dryly.

"Then he broke his promise. Just untie me, that's a good fellow, and I'll make it up to you. I've got two dollars in my pocket, and you may have them if you'll get me out of this scrape. Be quick, for Temple may be coming back, and he may kill us both."

"I don't want your two dollars, Philip," said Harry. "I am ready to release you without that——"

"Quick, then; that's a good fellow."

"Hear me out. I was going to say, on one condition."

"What is it?" asked Philip, impatiently.

"That you will beg my pardon for the trick you played on me," said Harry, quietly.

"What! I beg your pardon?" exclaimed Philip, haughtily.

"That is what I said."

"Do you think I would demean myself by asking anybody's pardon?" demanded Philip, his pride getting the better of his prudence.

"That is exactly what I expect, Philip Ross. If I had played such a mean trick on any one, I should think it no more than right to do just that thing."

"No," said Philip, stubbornly; "I won't do that, but I will give you the two dollars."

"I don't want your two dollars," returned Harry, contemptuously.

Two dollars was not so large a sum in his eyes as it would have been the day previous, for in the last twenty-four hours he had earned, and was confident of receiving, a reward of two hundred and fifty dollars. Still, even if this had not been the case, he would have disdained to sell his assistance to Philip.

"The money will do you a great deal more good than my asking your pardon," argued Philip.

"No, it won't. I am not very much in need of money, but I won't help a boy who has acted toward me as you have, unless you will apologize."

"Don't be a fool! Come and help me, and the money will be yours."

"It is no use, Philip; my mind is made up. Will you apologize?"

"No."

"Then, good-day! Give my respects to Mr. Temple when he returns."

So saying, Harry turned to leave the cabin, and Philip's heart sank in dismay as he saw the only one from whom he could hope for help leaving his presence.

"Hold on!" he called out. "I'll give you five

dollars! I haven't got it with me, but I can get it from my father. I'll hand it to you to-morrow."

Philip hated to humble his pride, and he would rather have paid five dollars, even if it came out of his own pocket, than submit to such a humiliation.

"Good-by, Philip," said Harry, resolutely.

"Are you really going to leave me? That's mean."

"You know the condition on which I'll help you."

"I'll give you ten dollars!" exclaimed Philip, desperately.

"Not a cent! I won't take a cent from you! Either I will help you or leave you here, but no money shall pass between us."

There was a calm resolution in Harry's tone which at last convinced Philip that he was in earnest.

"What do you want me to say?" he asked, sullenly.

"That you are sorry for the mean trick you played on me, and ask my pardon."

"All right. Now untie me."

"You haven't said it."

"It's the same thing."

"I don't consider it so."

"Well, tell me what you want, then," said Philip, querulously.

"Repeat after me: 'I am sorry for the mean trick I played on you, and I beg your pardon.' "

Philip was perforce obliged to do as Harry required, and he repeated the words, though with a very bad grace.

"That will do," said Harry. "Now I am satisfied."

He felt for his knife, but did not have it with him.

He therefore knelt down, and set to work to untie the knots in the rope.

He succeeded at last, but not without considerable difficulty and the expenditure of not a little time. At last he loosened the last knot, and said:

"Now you are free."

Philip jumped to his feet—for these were the last to be released—with an exclamation of satisfaction.

"Thank goodness!" he cried; "now I am free, and can leave this miserable hut!"

He looked up, and his hopefulness was succeeded by quick dismay.

There, in the doorway, scowling at the two boys, was the master of the cabin.



## CHAPTER XXVII

## THE ARREST

PHILIP's face changed suddenly, and he uttered an exclamation of dismay. He really believed that his life was in danger.

"There he is!" he ejaculated, his eyes nearly starting out of his head.

Harry turned, and his glance, too, fell on the menacing face of the outlaw. But his face did not reflect the terror so plainly to be seen on Philip's. It should be remembered, however—for I do not wish to give our hero more credit than he really deserves for his courage—that he knew help was near at hand, and Philip didn't.

Ralph Temple didn't speak at first. Then he looked from Philip to Harry, and demanded, savagely:

"Who released that boy?"

"I did," answered Harry, undaunted.

"How dared you do it!" again demanded Temple, in the same tone.

"I thought he must be uncomfortable."

Temple looked at him as if puzzled to account for his cool courage. It was evident that here was a boy who would not be easily scared.

"Did you know that I tied him?" asked Temple, fiercely.

"Yes."

"And yet you dared to untie him?"

"Certainly. You had no business to tie him."

"What! you dare say this to my face?"

"Why shouldn't I? What did you tie him for?"

"Didn't he tell you?"

"No."

"Then I will, though it's none of your business. He stole my property."

"Did you do that, Philip?" asked Harry, who was not yet aware of Temple's suspicion.

"No; I hope to die. I did not!" answered Philip, solemnly.

"What does he say that you stole?" continued Harry.

"He says I stole a tin box, containing some bonds or something."

"I begin to understand," thought Harry. "Philip is suffering for what I have done. I must free him, if I can."

"Was the box in the cabin?" he asked, not considering it prudent to betray all that he knew.

"No; it was buried in the earth, out in the woods," said Philip.

"That's true," said Temple, with an oath. "It was all the property I had."

"It's a queer place to keep articles of value," said Harry, looking steadily at Temple.

"I shall keep my own property where I please," said Temple, doggedly. "You don't suppose I'd keep it here in this hut. It wouldn't be safe for twenty-four hours."

"Did you see Philip take it?" continued Harry, assuming, unconsciously, the tone of a judge or advocate.

"No; but I saw him prowling round near-by, and the earth had been disturbed. As for the tin box, that was gone, and he stays here till it is found."

As he spoke he approached Philip, to tie him anew.

"Oh, please don't tie me again, Mr. Temple!" pleaded the terrified boy. "Indeed, I didn't carry off your tin box. I didn't know you had any."

"Perhaps the box dug itself up and walked off," said Temple, with withering sarcasm. "You must think I am a fool. Somebody dug it up, and knows where it is now."

"It wasn't me."

"At any rate, it won't do any harm to tie you up until I find out more about it."

Temple picked up the rope which Harry had thrown on the floor, and was about to repeat his work, when Philip exclaimed, partly from the in-

instinct of self-preservation, partly to gratify his mean spite against Harry:

"I shouldn't wonder if Harry Gilbert carried it off himself. He was prowling about the wood yesterday."

Harry could hardly believe his ears. This boy who accused him was the one he had just released from his bonds.

He looked at Philip, his face expressing the contempt he felt.

"I suppose this is to pay me for untying you?" he said.

"I can't help it; I am sure you did it," persisted Philip, thinking what a fine thing it would be for Harry to change places with him. "I am rich, and I have no need to steal. You are poor, and, I dare say, would like to get hold of Mr. Temple's bonds."

Temple paused a moment, and then said:

"The boy may be right. I'll tie both of you. One of you knows something about it, or I'm mistaken."

Philip's face fell. He had hoped to get free himself. It would be some satisfaction for him to see the boy he hated in the same plight, but still he would rather go free.

"Tie him first," he said.

It occurred to him that while Harry was being tied he might slip away.

"I know my own business best, youngster," said Temple.

And he made Philip sit down again in the chair from which he had been released.

"Don't you dare leave the cabin, unless you want to be brought back," he said to Harry. "Your turn will come next."

Harry did not answer, but coughed. It was the signal agreed upon between him and the officer outside.

Temple was on his knees beside Philip's chair, tying the boy, with his back toward the door. He listened to hear whether our hero made any attempt to escape, being prepared to pursue and bring him back by force.

He heard a slight motion, and looked around quickly.

There in the doorway stood a stranger, quietly covering him with a revolver.

Temple jumped to his feet, in surprise and alarm.

"Who are you?" he demanded.

"I am an officer of the law, Ralph Temple, and I call upon you to surrender," said the stranger, coolly.

"An officer? I don't believe it. Where is your uniform?"

"I had my reasons for not wearing it. Do you surrender?"

"Why should I? What do you want of me?" asked the outlaw, uneasily.

"I want you for the theft of a tin box of bonds, taken from an office in New York."

"I know nothing about it," said Temple, hastily.

"That is too late! I have heard you charge that boy with stealing it from you. You admitted that you had concealed it in the wood."

"That was my own property. I have been robbed of it."

"You will have a chance to prove that in a court of law."

"I'll do that, if you'll let me alone."

"I have orders to arrest you."

"Then you'll have to show that you are a stronger man than I!" exclaimed Temple, with an oath, and he prepared to dash forward.

"Stay where you are, or I fire!" said the officer, sternly.

Temple looked in his eyes, and saw that he was dealing with a man of resolution. He knew something of faces, and he saw that this man would be as good as his word.

"What do you want of me?" he said, sullenly.

"You must go with me."

"Lead on, then. I'll follow."

"I must adopt a little prudential measure first. Harry, take these handcuffs."

Harry stepped forward and received them from the officer.

"Hold out your hands"—this was said to Temple—"and let this boy put on the handcuffs."

"I'll kill him before I'll allow him to do it!" exclaimed Temple, violently.

"I don't think you will, or even make the attempt," said the officer, quietly. "You forget that I hold your life in my hands," and he made a slight motion with the revolver.

"You wouldn't dare to shoot?"

"If you should prove to be mistaken, it would be a serious mistake," said the officer, quietly.

It was his very quietness and freedom from excitement that daunted Temple.

"You'll repent this!" he said. "You've got the whip hand on me now, but the time will come when I'll get even with you."

"I have been threatened before," said the officer, briefly. "Harry, do what I told you."

Temple sullenly held out his wrists, and Harry put on the handcuffs.

"Now, follow me!"

They went out of the cabin, Philip following. He tried to be social with Harry, but our hero had not forgotten his mean attempt to throw suspicion upon him, after a service received at his hands, and received his advances very coldly.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

## MR. CHASE IS BROUGHT TO JUSTICE

TEMPLE's manner was sullen as he walked beside Harry and the officer, handcuffed. He overcame his sullenness, after a while, so far as to inquire:

"How came you to suspect me of this robbery?"

"Your friend Vernon has confessed it," answered the officer. "You may as well know, for it will do no harm."

"So he betrayed me?" said Temple, bitterly.

"He had no choice. He was trapped himself."

"Where is he now?"

"In prison, awaiting trial."

Temple looked better satisfied. He had suspected Vernon of turning State's evidence and betraying him.

"But how was he found out?" he asked, after a pause.

"The night you hid the tin box in the wood, there was some one who saw all that passed."

"Who was that?" asked Temple, eagerly.



"You will know in due time."

"Where are you taking me now?"

"To the county jail."

"Where is the tin box?"

"In the hands of the man from whom you stole it. There, I have answered your questions, and have no more to say."

"What do you think will be done with me?" asked Temple, anxiously.

The officer shrugged his shoulders.

"Gentlemen of your profession," he said, "are generally well informed on that point. If found guilty, you will be boarded at the expense of the county for a term of years."

"Curse the luck!" uttered Temple, savagely, and then was silent.

Philip had left them, and was on his way home, glad to get out of his predicament, but more incensed than ever against Harry for the mortification he had put upon him in compelling him to beg his pardon.

"I'll get even with him, see if I don't," he muttered.

When Harry and the officer had lodged their prisoner in jail, the latter said:

"I nearly forgot to tell you that Mr. Wheeler wishes you to call at his office to-morrow."

"In the morning?"

"As you please."

"I think I will go up by the morning train," said Harry, after a little reflection.

"Then you will be likely to meet me on the train. I shall be a passenger."

"I will look for you. I shall be glad to have company."

"By the way, that was very creditable work of yours, ferreting out the bond robbers."

"I was lucky, that is all," answered Harry, modestly.

"Partly so, but you have showed excellent judgment throughout, and personal bravery."

"Don't flatter me, Mr. Pry. You may make me conceited."

"You ought to be one of us."

"I don't think I should like it," said Harry, slowly.

"Perhaps not, but you're fitted for it, for all that. Well, good-day. I shall see you to-morrow."

"You are getting to be an important business man, Harry," said Uncle Obed, when our hero announced that he had a summons to the city next day.

"What is it all about, Harry?" asked his mother, rather puzzled.

"Let the boy explain in his own good time, Mrs. Gilbert," said the old man. "I know he isn't in any mischief."

"I may be able to tell you to-morrow evening,

mother. It will be something that will surprise you."

"I suppose it is all right, Harry, as Mr. Wilkins says so."

"Yes, mother, I can assure you of that."

In due time Harry boarded the morning train. He looked through the cars till he found Mr. Pry, the detective, and took a seat beside him.

It was not long before his attention was called to a smooth, plausible voice, proceeding from a person who sat two seats in advance of the one he occupied.

"My dear sir, if it will be any accommodation to you, I will myself buy your bond, and pay you the market price."

There was something in the voice, and in the words, that attracted Harry's attention and excited his suspicions.

"Excuse me a moment," he said to the detective, and, passing through the aisle, reached a point where he could look back at the speaker.

He knew him at once, not only by his face, but by the profusion of rings upon his fingers. It was the same man that had cheated the poor farmer by giving him counterfeit money in payment for his coupons.

If, however, he had any doubt, it was set at rest by what followed.

"I don't know," said his seat companion, an in-

dustrious mechanic; "perhaps I'd better wait, and sell it in the city."

"As you please, my friend," said the young man. "I only made the proposal thinking I might accommodate you."

"Is that your business—buying bonds?" asked the mechanic.

"In the city, yes. I am a member of the well-known firm of Chase & Atkins. Of course, you have heard of them."

"Ye-es," answered the mechanic, doubtfully.

"I am Mr. Chase. We do a general banking and brokerage business. Let me see, what is the denomination of your bond?"

"Eh?"

"I mean, of what size? Is it a fifty, or a hundred?"

"It's only a fifty, sir. It was a present to my wife. Now she wants to use a little money, and so she has got me to sell it."

"We give rather higher prices than most brokers," said Chase, smoothly.

"How can you do that?" asked the mechanic, who was a man of good common sense.

"Well, you see, we ship 'em to Europe, and make a handsome profit. It would be for your advantage to sell to me; but you must act your own will."

The mechanic began to think more favorably of

the proposal, and asked one or two more questions. Finally he said:

"Well, I don't know but I might as well. Have you got money enough with you?"

Chase took out a plethoric pocketbook, stuffed with bills, and called attention to it, smilingly:

"We bankers always have to be well provided with money."

The mechanic looked respectfully at the owner of so much money.

"I dare say it's more than I could earn in a year," he said.

"I dare say you are right, my friend," said the young man.

"Very well. Count out the money, and the bond is yours."

The exchange was made, and both parties seemed well satisfied.

Chase deposited the bond in an inside pocket, and then, saying, carelessly, "I'll go into the smoking car for a few minutes," rose from his seat.

But in the meantime Harry had returned to his own seat, and whispered a few words in the ear of the detective.

The latter sharply scrutinized the young man who called himself Chase, and said, in a low voice:

"I know him now. He's an old offender. I thought there was something familiar in his appearance. I'll look after you, my fine fellow."

He waited till the exchange had been effected, and the young man was on the point of leaving the car.

Then he rose, and, hurrying forward, placed his hand on the young man's shoulder.

"A word with you, sir," he said.

"Really, sir, I don't remember you."

"Perhaps not. I remember you. Do me the favor to return that bond to the man from whom you obtained it."

"It is mine. I have paid for it."

"With counterfeit money."

"Do you mean to insult me?" demanded Chase; but there was a sudden pallor on his face and a tremor in his voice.

"That will do, Jimmy Neal. I told you I knew you. That is an old trick of yours."

"Who are you?" asked the detected swindler, in a faltering voice.

"Pry, the detective."

"Will you let me go if I restore this bond?"

"No; there is another case I must inquire into--that of a farmer from whom you bought some coupons a day or two since, paying him in the same worthless rags. Sit down here," pointing to a vacant seat. "You may consider yourself under arrest."

Great was the consternation of the mechanic when he learned how nearly he had been swindled,

and profuse were his thanks to Harry and the officer.

"Be more prudent the next time," said the latter, "and don't sell bonds to a stranger in the cars again."

We may as well add that the traveling broker was duly tried, and sentenced to a term in State's prison, and that enough good money was found on him to repay the farmer for the coupons he had imprudently parted with.

Greatly to his satisfaction, Harry was intrusted with the office of acquainting Simon Jones with the pleasant fact that his money would be restored to him.

## CHAPTER XXIX

## HARRY BECOMES A "BONDHOLDER."

WHEN Harry entered the office of Mr. Wheeler, the lawyer was engaged with a client. He nodded pleasantly to our hero, and said:

"I shall be at leisure very soon. You will find the morning paper on that table."

When his interview with the client was over, he beckoned to Harry to approach.

"Well," he said, "thanks to your good management, we have triumphantly succeeded. The stolen property is recovered, and the thieves are in custody."

"It was not so much good management as good luck," said Harry.

"Partly both; but, however that may be, the owner of the property authorizes me to make a substantial acknowledgment for the service you have rendered him. Let me see—the reward offered was two hundred and fifty dollars."

"That's too much, sir."

"The gentleman who gives it does not think so.



Indeed, he authorizes me to somewhat exceed it. In this envelope"—here the lawyer produced a large-size package—"you will find two one-hundred-dollar government bonds and one fifty. The value of the three, at present prices, is nearer three hundred dollars than two hundred and fifty. I need not caution you to take good care of them."

"Are they for me?" asked Harry, his cheeks flushing with pleasure.

"Yes; they are six per cent. bonds, and will bring you fifteen dollars a year in interest—not quite enough to live upon," the lawyer added, with a smile, "but something to add to your income."

"I can hardly realize that I am worth so much money," said Harry, as he took the package and put it into his inside coat pocket.

"Have you a watch?" asked Mr. Wheeler.

"No, sir," replied Harry, in surprise.

"I thought not; and I, therefore, ask you to accept one as a gift, not from my client, but from me."

He produced a handsome silver watch, manufactured at Waltham, with a silver chain attached.

Now, Harry had long wanted a watch, but the prospect of obtaining one before he was of age had seemed very remote. At the moment, I think, the present of the watch gratified him as much as that of the bonds, though the latter were ten times as valuable.

"It is beautiful," he said; "but, Mr. Wheeler, why should you give me a present? The bonds were not yours."

"That is true, but they were under my charge, and I should have been seriously troubled had they not been recovered. Take the watch, my boy, and I hope it will please you as much to receive it as it does me to give it."

"Thank you, sir," said Harry, warmly. "It seems to me there is no end to my good fortune."

"Continue to deserve it, my boy, and I think it will continue. I must bid you good-morning now, as I have another appointment."

"Good-morning, sir, and thank you."

"By the way," the lawyer added, "I shall bear you in mind, and, should I have any work which I think you can do, I will send for you."

"I shall be glad to serve you in any way, sir."

So saying, Harry left the office. He was so much in a hurry to show his present at home that, though it was still early, he decided to take the next train, which would bring him home about noon.

His mother and Mr. Wilkins had just seated themselves at the dinner table when Harry entered.

"What! home already, Harry?" asked his mother, in surprise.

"I judge from your tone, mother, that you haven't got enough dinner for me," said Harry, gayly.

"If that's the case, I'll eat a little less," said Uncle Obed. "But why didn't you stay longer?"

"Because I got through with my business, and thought I might as well come home," answered Harry.

By this time his mother's eyes happened to fall on the silver chain displayed across his vest.

"What is that, Harry?" she asked.

Harry drew out the watch, with pardonable pride.

"Where did you get it?" asked his mother, in amazement.

"A lawyer in New York gave it to me."

"But what lawyer do you know, my son?" asked his mother, more and more bewildered.

"That isn't all, mother. Look at that!"

Harry drew out the package of bonds, and displayed them to his astonished mother.

She at once concluded that he had found them.

"They are not yours, Harry," she said. "If you found them, you must restore them to the owner."

"So I will, Mrs. Gilbert. I give these bonds to you, and recommend you to take good care of them."

"What does all this mean, Harry? You cannot give away what does not belong to you."

Harry felt that it was time to explain, and he did so. It was necessary to begin with the account of Philip's treatment of him in the wood.

Mrs. Gilbert was very indignant, and she spoke warmly.

"It was shameful!" she said. "To leave you there alone in the dark wood, tied hand and foot! The boy ought to be served in the same way himself!"

"Wait till I get through my story, mother," he said, "and perhaps you will find that Philip got into a little trouble of his own."

So he continued his story, and told, finally, of how he found Philip Ross bound, and trembling for his life, in the cabin of Ralph Temple.

"Served him right," said Mrs. Gilbert, satisfactorily.

"As things have turned out, I can afford to overlook his past meanness. He has suffered punishment, though not at my hands."

"If I had known that you were mixed up with burglars, I should have felt very anxious, Harry."

"I know it, and that is why I didn't tell you. However, all's well that ends well. The tin box is found, the robbers are caught, and I have a rich mother."

As he spoke, he put the bonds into his mother's hands.

"But, Harry, they are yours. I cannot accept them."

"Take care of them, at any rate, mother, and

use the interest. I shall like it better than to keep them myself."

"You are a good boy, Harry," said Uncle Obed. "I like to see boys think considerable of their mothers. And now, if you are both ready for dinner, I am."

"Excuse me, Mr. Wilkins. I was so intent upon Harry's story that I am afraid the dinner is cold."

They sat down to dinner, and the meal was a very happy one, even if the dishes were somewhat cold. Harry's good luck put them all in fine spirits.

After dinner Harry went out into the village, in the direction of the store.

I suspect he wanted to show his watch, as most boys do when for the first time they become the proud possessor of one.

On the way he met Philip Ross and James Congreve. The latter he had not seen since they parted in the wood.

"There's our young captive, Philip," said Congreve.

"He's got a watch. At any rate, I see a watch chain," said Philip, whose curiosity was excited.

"Hello!" called out Congreve, as they met; "where did you get that watch?"

"I don't see wherein my having a watch should concern you; but I do know, after the contemptible treatment I received at your hands yesterday, your questions deserve no notice from me. But, as mat-

ters turned out so well, I can afford to swallow my indignation."

"It was rather a mean trick, leaving you bound in the wood," said Congreve, candidly. "I wouldn't have done it, except to oblige Philip."

"Has he told you how he liked being tied himself?"

Congreve looked, in surprise, at Philip. The latter had not chosen to say anything about his own adventure in Temple's hut.

When Harry told the story, not omitting to mention that he had compelled Philip to beg his pardon before he released him, Congreve burst into hearty laughter, while Philip stood by, angry and ashamed.

"That's the best joke I ever heard," said Congreve. "I wish I had been there to see."

"I thought you were my friend," said Philip, indignantly.

"I laugh at my friends sometimes," said Congreve. "What a splendid joke!"

Philip didn't see it in that light, and was so mortified that he didn't give Congreve an opportunity to ask further about the watch, but hurriedly moved on. All the remainder of the afternoon he passed in a sullen frame of mind.

## CHAPTER XXX

## CONGREVE'S SCHEME

JAMES CONGREVE was a dangerous companion for Philip. He was utterly unscrupulous, but took care to keep up a semblance of propriety, in order not to terrify the boy whom he was leading into mischief.

They had commenced playing cards for amusement—at least, that was Congreve's pretext—but it had led to playing for a stake.

Occasionally, when the stake was small, Congreve allowed Philip to win; but, when more than a dollar was staked on the game, he generally managed to win himself.

Of course, Philip did not know that he was a victim, and that his chosen friend, Congreve, was a skillful sharper, who had practiced his art on Western steamboats, and was sure to get the better of him.

Why had he remained in this country village so long? Surely, it didn't pay him to fleece one victim, and that one a boy.

I can give the explanation.

He had been leading a fast life for a year back, and a physician whom he consulted had recommended country air and quiet for the summer.

"Unless you follow my directions, Mr. Congreve," he said, "I won't answer for your life. You have been going at too quick a pace altogether."

James was sensible enough to follow this advice, and that is why we find him a guest at the quiet village hotel.

The physician's advice proved to be good. His wasted energies were recuperated, his thin cheeks filled out and showed a healthy color, his appetite improved, and he felt himself again.

When the first week in September arrived, he felt that he was well enough to go back to the city, to more congenial scenes. He was heartily tired of the country, and anxious to get away. Only one thing remained to be done, and that was to collect what Philip owed him.

"I can't wait any longer," he said to himself. "I must compel the boy to pay up. It will liquidate my hotel bill and leave me something over. I can't let the thing stand any longer."

Soon after he had come to this conclusion, Philip entered his friend's chamber.

"How are you, Phil?" said Congreve, carelessly.

"All right!"

"By the way, I've got some news for you."



"What is it?"

"I'm going away."

"Going away? Where?"

"Back to the city first. I have an urgent summons from my friends there."

"How soon do you go?"

"That depends upon you."

"Upon me? I don't understand!" said Philip, puzzled.

"You ought to. As soon as you have paid me what you owe me. I need it to enable me to settle up at the hotel."

Philip turned pale. It was just what he had worried over many a time—this terrible debt, which he felt utterly unable to liquidate.

"How much is it?" he asked, nervously.

"How much? Really, I haven't reckoned it up yet; but I will," said Congreve, carelessly.

He took out his wallet, and drew out a variety of papers, to which Philip's signature was attached.

Then he sat down at a table, took a pencil from his pocket, set the different sums on paper, and added them up deliberately. All this was humbug, for he had added it up before Philip came in, and knew to a dollar how much it amounted to. Philip stood by, feeling miserably uncomfortable, while the reckoning went on.

"Really," said Congreve, looking up at length,

in assumed surprise, "I had no idea it amounted to so much!"

"How much does it come to?" questioned his wretched dupe.

"One hundred and thirty-six dollars," was the calm response.

"A hundred and thirty-six dollars!" gasped Philip.

"Yes; surprising, isn't it? Little sums count up, you know. However, we've had some fun out of it, haven't we?"

"I don't see where the fun comes in," said Philip, bitterly. "Of course, it's fun for you to win so much."

"You won some of the time, Phil. Think how many games we have had, and how exciting it was. You play a good deal better game than you did."

"But I have lost a big pile of money."

"Oh, yes. Experience costs money, you know. You'll get it all back, and more, too, some day."

"How can I, when you are going away?"

"I don't mean out of me. I suppose my game is better than yours. I mean out of somebody else."

Philip was silent. The hope held out did not seem to comfort him much.

"When will you pay me that money, Phil?" asked Congreve, abruptly.

"When? I'm sure I don't know. I haven't any money, you know."

"That won't do. It isn't satisfactory," said Congreve, assuming a sternness he had never before exhibited toward his friend.

"What do you mean?" asked Philip, half frightened, half offended.

"I mean that I need the money, and must have it."

"I'd pay it to you if I had it, but I haven't."

"You must get it."

"How can I? My father won't give it to me."

"Listen to me. I am in earnest. I want to ask you a question. Suppose you had won, wouldn't you have expected me to pay you?"

"Why, yes, I suppose so."

"Well, it's a poor rule that doesn't work both ways. I tell you, Phil, I need that money. I need it to pay my hotel bill."

"Was that what you depended upon to pay your bills?" asked Philip, with awakening suspicion. "I thought you had plenty of money."

This was what Congreve had represented to his dupe, but the question by no means disconcerted him.

"Of course," he said; "but a man can't always command his resources. I have sent in two different directions for money, but they have put me off, so I have to fall back on you."

"I'd like to pay the money, and get it off my

mind," said Philip, uncomfortably, "but the fact of it is I can't."

"This is a debt of honor. Gentlemen always pay their debts of honor. It takes precedence of all other claims."

"I have no other claims. That is all I owe to anybody."

"Well, when can you let me have the money?"

"I am sure I don't know," returned Philip, sullenly. "I didn't expect you were going to press me so."

James Congreve saw that Philip had reached the point which he desired.

"I press you because I have to," he said. "I have already told you how you can settle the claim."

"How?" asked Philip, uneasily.

He could guess, for there had been conversation on that point before.

"You know what I mean. Get hold of some of your father's government bonds," said Congreve, insinuatingly.

"I don't want to become a thief."

"Pooh! Isn't he your father, and ain't you an only son? Won't it all be yours sometime?"

"Yes, but——"

"Oh, don't bother with buts! That makes all the difference in the world."

"I couldn't do it without being suspected," ob-

jected Philip, with whom this was the principal consideration.

"Yes, you can. You'll give the bonds to me, and I will dispose of them. If you could get hold of two hundred-dollar bonds, I would give you the balance, after deducting the amount of my debt."

"But I am sure to be suspected."

"Unless you throw the suspicion upon some one else."

"How can I?"

"There's your friend, Harry Gilbert——"

"He isn't my friend."

"Well, your enemy, then. So much the better. You can say you saw him prowling round the house. If you could get him arrested, it would be a satisfaction, even if he wasn't convicted."

"That's true. I should like to get even with him."

"So you can. You can throw suspicion on him, and get off free yourself. It will be a splendid revenge."

Philip began to think favorably of the scheme, and before he left the hotel had agreed to it.

## CHAPTER XXXI

## THE TEMPTER

PHILIP was far from being a model boy—as we have seen, he didn't shrink from meanness—but it was not without reluctance that he assented to James Congreve's proposal. He did not feel that abhorrence of theft that a better principled boy would have done, but the thought of resorting to it gave him a sense of humiliation. Besides, the fear of detection inspired in him a certain uneasy feeling. In fact, he retraced his steps, and sought Congreve in his room again.

"What! back again?" asked James, in surprise.

"Yes," replied Philip. "I've changed my mind. I don't want to do what you proposed to me."

"Don't want to do it?" repeated Congreve, frowning. "What nonsense is this?"

"No nonsense at all," retorted Philip, not liking his friend's tone. "I don't want to be a thief."

"You won't be. It's all in the family, you know."

"What if it is? Father won't take that view of it."

"That won't matter to you."

"Why not?"

"Because he won't know you took the bonds. You're not going to tell him."

"He may find out."

"Look here, Phil. You're the biggest coward I ever met!"

"If you think so, suppose you do it yourself," said Philip. "That'll show whether you are a coward or not."

"That's absurd. It wouldn't be in the family then. The bonds don't belong to my father. There wouldn't be any excuse for me."

"You want me to do what you are unwilling to do."

"You already explained why. Besides, I've no object in taking them. As for you, why they are part yours already; and, besides, you need the money you can raise out of them to pay your debts."

"I haven't any debts, except to you."

"So much the better for you," answered Congreve, coolly. "You won't have any one to pay except me."

"I wish I'd never made your acquaintance," said poor Philip.

"Very complimentary, upon my word!" replied Congreve, with a sneer. "It strikes me that you have got as much pleasure out of the acquaintance as I."

"I haven't got you into my debt."

"It isn't my fault if I am a better player at cards than you. However, that's neither here nor there. I don't propose to play any more with you. I ought not to have let you run up such a score. Just pay that off, and I won't trouble you any more."

"I've told you I can't pay you."

"Except in one way, and that way is an easy enough one. Listen to reason, Phil," he said, dropping his sneer. "Don't you see it is going to benefit you as well as me? You'll have a good deal of money left for your own use, after paying me, provided you take two hundred-dollar bonds. It will be convenient to have fifty or sixty dollars in your pocket, eh?"

"Yes," assented Philip, more cheerfully.

"Of course it will, and it will be fun to see Harry Gilbert hauled up for stealing them. Ho! ho! ho!"

Philip echoed the laughter. This phase of the transaction certainly did please him.

"If it can be brought about," he said, doubtfully.

"Of course it can. Listen, and I'll tell you how. You can tell your father you saw Harry acting suspiciously near the house the evening it is done."

"But the door would be locked."

"You can unlock it, and leave it unlocked all night. It will be found so in the morning; and, even if the bonds are not immediately missed, the circumstance will be remembered."



Philip's mind changed again. The plan looked more feasible and attractive as Congreve represented it.

"Well, I don't know but I'll try it," he said.

"I thought you'd be sensible," said Congreve, inwardly rejoiced. "Now, let me give you one piece of advice."

"What is that?"

"Strike while the iron's hot. If you want to know what that means, never put off till to-morrow what you can do to-day."

"You don't mean I should go right home and do it?" said Philip, nervously.

"No; wait till to-night—when everybody is in bed. Then steal downstairs and do the job. The sooner it's over, the better!"

"I'll see about it," replied Philip, hesitatingly.

"He's a little coward," said Congreve to himself; "but I guess I can bring him to it."

## CHAPTER XXXII

## PHILIP DOES NOT FEEL HAPPY

AT supper time Philip seemed so sober and pre-occupied that his mother said:

"What ails you, Philip?"

"Nothing. What makes you ask?"

"I thought you were looking unusually sober."

"I suppose it is because I have a headache," answered the boy.

It was not a falsehood, for the burden upon his mind had actually given him a slight headache.

"You'd better let me mix you some chamomile tea," said Mrs. Ross, with whom this was a specific against more than one bodily disability.

"No, thank you," answered Philip, with an involuntary grimace; for, in his younger days, when it was useless to resist, he had more than once had an opportunity of learning how far from agreeable chamomile tea was to the taste. "It doesn't ache much. It will be better soon."

"The tea will cure you immediately, my son."

"I won't take it," said Philip, roughly.

"Don't speak in that way to your mother, Philip," said his father, reprovingly.

"Do you ever let her give you chamomile tea, father?"

"No," smiled the Colonel, "I don't require it."

"Nor I; and, if I did, I prefer the headache."

"I am not sure whether I don't agree with you," said his father, smiling again.

When supper was over, Philip lounged about restlessly. Nothing could be done as yet—nothing, indeed, till his father had retired and was fairly asleep—and, in the meantime, he had to wait in suspense.

He strolled out to the stable without any definite object to take him there. He was in an unquiet, irritable frame of mind, which was likely to exhibit itself on the smallest provocation.

A boy of seventeen, Tom Calder by name, was employed by Colonel Ross to look after his two horses and attend to any errands or light duties that might be required about the house.

Philip, as he entered the stable, saw Tom sitting on a kitchen chair, which had been transferred to the stable, engaged in reading a weekly paper.

"What are you doing there, Tom?" he demanded, in an imperious tone.

If Philip had asked in a civil tone, Tom would have answered him with civility, but the boy's tone was offensive, and Tom was too spirited to bear it.

"What's that to you, Phil?" he retorted.

"You'll find out what it is!" answered Philip, angrily.

"That's just what I'm wanting to do."

"And don't you presume to call me Phil, either."

"Why—isn't it your name?"

"Yes; but it isn't for you to call me by it."

"What am I to call you, now?"

"You can call me Master Philip, or Mr. Philip."

"Ho! ho! It's a joke you're playing on me!"

"No, it isn't. It is your duty to treat me with respect. But you haven't answered my question."

"What is it?"

"What are you doing there?"

"Reading a paper. Can't you see for yourself?"

"That isn't what my father pays you for. Go right to work."

"Shure, you want me to work day and night! That's what Tom Calder won't do for no man—last of all for a boy like you!"

"If you ain't careful, my father will send you away."

"If he does, I'll get another place soon," said Tom, indifferently.

"You're an impudent loafer!"

"The same to yourself," said Tom, indifferently.

After a little further altercation, Philip walked off in dudgeon. It was clear that he couldn't bully Tom.

## CHAPTER XXXIII

## STEALING THE BONDS

CONTRARY to his usual custom, Philip spent the evening at home; and, as he must have something to occupy him, he spent it in reading. Usually, he cared very little for reading, and was prone to spend the evening out.

Mrs. Ross regarded her son with approval, as she saw him steadily reading all the evening.

"I do believe you're getting studious, Phil," she said.

"I'm interested in a story," remarked Phil.

"How much better it is to spend the evening at home reading than to be gadding about?" said his mother.

"Well, you know a boy can't be always reading," observed Philip.

If Mrs. Ross had been a close observer, she might have noticed that Philip got over wonderfully few pages. Indeed, he sometimes held the book open at the same place for half an hour together. The fact was that Philip cared very little

for reading, unless he could get hold of some highly sensational story about highwaymen or pirates. He simply used the book as a cover.

The Colonel, his father, was sitting in a room which he called his office, opening out of the family sitting-room, and Philip had seated himself so that he could look into that room, and watch what his father was doing.

Near his desk, Colonel Ross kept a small, iron-bound trunk, which he used as a sort of safe, or a repository for valuable papers, and sometimes for bonds and securities. It was imprudent, for anyone might readily have carried it off; but the Colonel didn't think of this, or, at any rate, didn't feel inclined to go to the expense of a safe. Indeed, most of his bonds and securities were deposited in the strong room of the county bank, and, therefore, his imprudence was less.

Philip's eager attention was roused when he saw his father rise from his desk, take up the trunk and open it, as it lay on the desk where he placed it.

"Now, I may find out what he has inside," thought Philip.

Colonel Ross opened it, as I have said, and took out several envelopes. Opening one of these, he drew therefrom what Philip recognized to be government bonds, and spread them out before him.

What was the object of this examination, Philip could not divine, nor did he particularly care,

though he might had he known that his father was considering the expediency of selling them, and buying another security—the stock of a certain railroad—which would pay larger dividends. His main interest was to ascertain whether his father had any government bonds, and this question he was now able to answer in the affirmative.

After a brief inspection, Colonel Ross replaced in the trunk the securities he had taken from it, and locked the trunk. The bunch of keys, one of which opened the trunk, he laid on the desk, unconsciously, probably.

“I hope he’ll forget ’em,” said Philip to himself. “It’ll save me a good bit of trouble.”

It seemed likely that the keys would be forgotten, for Colonel Ross, as though his business were ended, took the lamp from his desk, and entered the sitting-room, where his wife and son were seated.

“I don’t know how it is, wife,” he said, “but I feel sleepy.”

“It isn’t your bed hour yet. It is only half-past nine.”

“That is true, but I shall go to bed earlier than usual to-night.”

“All the better for me,” thought Philip. “Now, if mother would only go, too!”

It seemed as if everything was turning out favorably for his plan, for his mother answered:

"Well, I think I will accompany you—that is, if Philip won't feel lonely."

Philip's heart beat with eager satisfaction. He had expected that he would be obliged to go to bed, and wait there till his father and mother were asleep, then steal downstairs, running the risk of detection, light a lamp, and commit the theft. Now it looked as if he could do it much more easily.

He answered, in as indifferent a voice as he could assume:

"I am not at all sleepy. I'll stay up a little longer and read."

Mrs. Ross nodded, in a satisfied way, to her husband.

"I do believe Phil's getting fond of reading," she said.

"I hope he is," returned the father.

"Phil," said his mother, "the servant is out to-night. A cousin of hers is sick, and I gave her permission to stay with her all night. Are you willing to close up the house?"

"Oh, yes," answered Phil, briskly. "I'm glad she's away," he thought. "She won't be spying round and see what I'm about. Besides, I can leave the door open, so that it will be easier to accuse Harry Gilbert."

"Good-night," said his mother.

"Good-night, mother."

"Don't stay up too late reading."



"No, I won't."

"How many more pages are there, Philip?" asked his father.

"About four hundred," answered Phil, looking over to the end.

"Then I wouldn't advise you to sit up till you've finished the book," he said, jocosely.

"I guess not. I shan't sit up more than half an hour."

So Colonel and Mrs. Ross went upstairs, and the coast was clear.

When he was left alone, and felt that the hour so long anticipated had come, Philip's heart beat fast.

"Come; it's easier than I hoped," he said to himself. "And father left his keys, too, on the desk. I hope he won't think of them, and come downstairs after them. That might upset my plans, though I've got a lot of old keys in my pocket, and one of them might answer. However, there's none so good as the real thing."

Philip had to consider whether he would wait till his father and mother were asleep, or act sooner. He at length decided, in the words of Shakespeare, though he was not familiar with them:

"If 'twere done with when 'tis done,  
Then, 'twere well it were done quickly."

The argument was this: If he acted soon, he could make use of his father's keys, and that would

save him trouble. On the other hand, there was some risk that his father might think of them, and, coming downstairs, surprise him. However, Philip didn't think this was likely, and, in any event, he resolved to take the risk. He could pretend that he had just caught sight of his keys, and was going to carry them upstairs for safekeeping.

Indeed, Philip did not wait more than ten minutes.

"Father must be in bed by this time," he said to himself.

He took the small lamp by which he was reading, and entered his father's office.

There lay the keys, and there stood the trunk.

He took the bunch of keys and selected a small one, which he thought likely to fit the trunk.

It did.

The lid was lifted, and Philip, with eager hand, took the envelope which he knew contained the government bonds. It was a bulky envelope, and contained probably eight or ten bonds.

Of course, Philip didn't venture to take all. He selected two, of one hundred dollars each, and replaced the others in the envelope, and afterward in the trunk.

He put the bonds in his inside coat pocket, and, hastily refastening the trunk, replaced the keys on his father's desk.

He breathed a sigh of relief to think the thing was done, and walked over to the window.

What was his gratification to see Harry Gilbert walking by on the other side of the street.

"All happens right," he said. "Now, Harry can't say he was at home. I'll fix him. I'll say I saw him at the window, looking in, and his denial won't amount to much, when he admits, as he will, that he was near the house."

He would have felt differently had he seen the face of Tom Calder peering in at one of the side windows. Tom had spent the evening in the village, and was now on his return to his chamber, on the second floor of the stable. His attention was attracted by the light in the room, and, as the curtain was partly raised, he took the liberty of peering in, unobserved.

"By gracious!" he exclaimed, in amazement. "Phil is stealing gov'ment bonds from his father. He's a bad one, but I didn't think that of him."

Tom slipped out, resolved to consider at his leisure what he had better do about imparting his secret information. It was well he did, for Phil himself almost immediately came to the same window.

## CHAPTER XXXIV

## PHILIP GETS RID OF HIS PLUNDER

"PHILIP," said his mother, at the breakfast table the next morning, "the servant tells me she found the outside door unlocked this morning. Didn't I ask you to lock it before you went to bed?"

"So you did, mother. I really hope you'll excuse me. When I got ready to go to bed, I forgot all about it."

"It might have proved serious," remarked his father, "for I found this morning that I had left my bunch of keys on my desk. I don't see how I came to be so negligent."

"It's lucky no burglar or dishonest person knew of it," said Mrs. Ross. "You might have met with a serious loss."

"So I might, for I had about a thousand dollars' worth of government bonds in my trunk, besides certificates of various kinds of stock. The latter would have done no one any good, though the loss would have annoyed me, but the government bonds might readily be sold."

"I shouldn't think you'd keep the trunk down-

stairs, father," said Philip, who felt easy, as there seemed no likelihood of suspicion being fixed upon him.

He resolved so to act as to divert any future suspicion.

"I don't know but it is imprudent," said Colonel Ross.

"Of course it is," said his wife. "You deserve to suffer loss."

"I will take it upstairs hereafter," said her husband, "especially," he added, jocularly, "if Philip is to be trusted to lock the front door."

Philip smiled, but his smile was not exactly an easy one, for he was every minute apprehensive that it would occur to his father to open the trunk and examine the contents. He did not want this to happen till he was out of the way, for it would be rather a trial to his nerves to hear the announcement made of the loss, while he knew that the missing bonds were concealed in his inside coat pocket.

Philip was in a hurry to see Congreve, and get rid of his troublesome deposit. He hurried through his breakfast, therefore, and rose from the table.

"You've eaten very little, Phil," said his mother.

"Oh, I'm not hungry," said Philip, carelessly. "I didn't get up early enough to raise an appetite."

"You got up as early as usual," said his father.

"Perhaps reading in the evening didn't agree with me," replied Philip, smiling.

"Where are you going?" asked his mother.

"Just out for a walk."

"Will you call at the grocery store and tell them to send up a barrel of flour?"

"All right."

Usually Philip, who was far from obliging naturally, made a fuss when asked to do an errand, but now he spoke very good-humoredly. He was so anxious to get out of the house that he was ready to promise anything.

"I really think Philip is improving," said his mother, after he had gone out.

"There's some room for it," remarked his father, dryly.

Philip, as may be supposed, made his way as quickly as possible to the hotel. As he came up, he saw the one of whom he was in search—James Congreve—standing on the piazza, smoking a cigarette.

"Well?" he said, guessing something from the evident excitement of Philip's manner.

"Let us go up to your room, Congreve," said Phil.

"All right."

He led the way upstairs to the small room which he occupied as a bedroom, and Philip followed him in. The latter carefully closed the door.

"I've got 'em," he exclaimed, triumphantly.

"The bonds? You don't say!"

"As true as you stand there."

"Let me see them."

Philip drew the bonds from his pocket, and handed them to Congreve.

The latter said, joyfully:

"You're a trump, Phil!"

"Yes, I think I managed pretty well," said Phil, complacently.

"Tell me how you did it."

So Phil explained.

"You were in precious luck, I can tell you. I had no idea things would turn in your favor so. Let me see—here are two one-hundreds."

"Yes; that's what you said."

"True. Were there more in the trunk?"

"Yes; I heard father say there were a thousand dollars in bonds."

James Congreve's face was overspread by an expression of covetousness.

"It's a pity you didn't take more," he said.

"But what was the need of taking more? These will pay my debt to you."

"Of course. Still, it seemed such a good chance."

"You don't think I'm going to set up as a thief, do you, Congreve?" asked Philip, in surprise.

"No, of course not. I didn't mean anything. Well, Phil, the sooner these are disposed of the better."

"You are going to attend to that?"

"Yes. I believe I will take the next train up to the city."

"When will you be back?"

"To-night. I will bring you the balance of the money—say, fifty dollars."

"There ought to be more than that for me."

"Oh, it will be all right! Only, you know, I will have to sell them below the market price, at some place where no questions are asked."

"I've no doubt you'll do the square thing," said Philip, who did not know that this statement of Congreve's was only a flimsy pretense to enable him to appropriate a larger share of the plunder, as it may fairly be called.

"I'll promise you fifty dollars, whatever the bonds bring," said Congreve.

"Thank you."

"Now, I must get ready, for the next train leaves for the city in half an hour."

"I'll go along with you to the depot," said Philip.

"No, you'd better not. After the loss is discovered, it might excite some remark, and possibly suspicion, if it were remembered."

"Then I'll be going. I've got an errand over at the store. Shall I see you to-night?"

"You'd better not come around till to-morrow morning. It may help avert suspicion."

"Just as you say."



"A pretty good haul!" said Congreve to himself. "I didn't think the little fool would have spunk enough to do it, but he has. I may pay him that fifty dollars, and then again I may not. I don't think I shall care to come back again to this dull hole to-night. I shall have to leave my trunk, but it isn't worth the sum I owe the landlord, and he is welcome to it. With the price of these bonds I can start anew cheaper."

Philip left his friend, without the least suspicion that he intended to play him false. He felt very comfortable. He had got the bonds out of his possession, so that there was no danger of their being found on him, and he was to receive, the next morning, fifty dollars, a larger sum than he had ever possessed at one time in his life. He made up his mind that he would put it away in his trunk, and use it from time to time as he had occasion for it.

He went to the grocery store, and left his mother's order. Then he took an aimless walk, for Congreve was away, and there was no one else he cared to be with.

So he turned to go home. He rather dreaded to enter the house, lest his father might have discovered his loss. In the yard he saw Tom Calder. Tom, remembering what he had seen the evening before, looked at Philip with a significant grin, but said nothing.

"What are you grinning at?" demanded Philip.

"Nothing. I feel gay and festive, that is all," responded the stable boy.

"Where's my father?"

"He went out to ride in the buggy."

Philip felt relieved. Evidently the loss had not been discovered yet. He was glad to have it put off.

"Is there any news?" asked Tom, with another grin.

"News? Why should there be any?"

"I don't know. I thought you might know of some."

"You talk like a fool," said Philip, angrily, and went into the house.

"There'll be some news soon, I reckon," said Tom to himself, with a grin. "I won't say nothing till the time comes. Wonder if Philip'll think I am talking like a fool then?"

## CHAPTER XXXV

## THROWING SUSPICION ON HARRY

DURING the day Colonel Ross had no occasion to look into his trunk of securities. Clearly, he had no suspicion that he had met with a loss.

It might strike the reader as curious that Philip began to be impatient to have his father make the discovery. An impending blow always leads to a state of suspense which is by no means agreeable. When the blow falls, a certain relief is felt. So Philip knew that the discovery would be made sooner or later, and he wanted to have the matter settled, and clear himself at once from suspicion by diverting it to Harry Gilbert.

In the hope that his father would find out his loss, he lingered round the house through the afternoon, filling up the time as well as he could. Usually, he would have passed at least a part of the time with James Congreve, but the latter had gone to the city.

"Don't you feel well, Philip?" asked his mother.

"Certainly! What makes you ask?"

"You don't generally stay at home all the afternoon."

"Oh, well, there isn't anything going on in the village."

"Where is that friend of yours who is staying at the hotel?"

"He went away this morning to the city."

"Isn't he coming back?"

"Oh, yes, I suppose so."

"I suppose you feel lonely without him?"

"Yes, mother."

"Have you seen anything of Uncle Obed lately?" asked Mrs. Ross, making a wry face as she pronounced the word admitting the relationship.

"Yes; I saw him walking with the Gilbert boy the other evening."

"Did you speak to him?"

"No; I just nodded. I don't care about getting intimate with him. I wish he'd leave town."

"As likely as not, he'll use up all his money, and then come on your father for help."

"I hope father won't give him anything, then," said Philip.

"I am willing that he should give him enough to get him back to Illinois. He ought never to have left there. If he thinks we are going to pay his board here, all I can say is that he is very much mistaken," said Mrs. Ross, pressing her thin lips together with emphasis.

"That's the talk, ma! I am glad you don't mean to be imposed upon. I suppose old Wilkins thinks you are soft, and won't see him suffer. You'd better keep a stiff upper lip."

"He will know me better after a while," said Mrs. Ross.

The afternoon wore away, and supper came. Philip partook as usual, and waited afterward in the confident expectation that his father would open the small trunk. He was not mistaken.

Upon retiring to his special apartment, Colonel Ross took up the trunk, and, producing the key, opened it.

It so happened that he was after some papers, and did not immediately take up the envelope containing the government bonds. Philip was rather afraid he wouldn't, and ventured to remind him of them by a question.

"How many government bonds have you in that envelope, pa?" he asked.

"A little over a thousand dollars," answered Colonel Ross.

"Will you let me look at one? I want to see how it looks."

This question led the colonel to open the envelope. He took out a bond and handed it to Philip.

"Are these coupons?" asked Philip, who knew perfectly well, but only wanted to fix his father's attention.

"Yes, they are promises to pay interest semi-annually. In January and July I cut off one of these little slips, and receive the interest it represents in gold."

"That's very convenient, isn't it?"

"Yes, for I can get the coupons cashed at any bank or broker's office."

Almost mechanically, he began to draw out the bonds and count them. But his air of inattention was quickly replaced by a look of surprise and anxiety. He counted the bonds over again, more deliberately, but each time the number came short two.

"That's strange," he said, in a low tone.

"What is strange, pa?"

"Two bonds seem to be missing," said his father, in a tone of concern.

"I've got one, you know, in my hand."

"Yes, yes. I reckoned that."

"How large were they? Is it much of a loss?"

"One hundred dollars apiece, and each worth a hundred and fifteen dollars, on account of the premium. Do you know anything about them?" and Colonel Ross fixed a piercing eye on his son.

"I, pa? How should I know anything about them? Why, I didn't know exactly how they looked. When did you see them all last?"

"Last evening. I happened to count them then.

They must have been taken from the trunk since then."

"Then I am almost sure I know how it happened," said Philip, suddenly, as if a light had dawned upon him.

"I should like to have you tell me, then."

"You remember, pa, you left the keys on the desk?"

"Yes; but there was no one here except you," and again the father had suspicion of his son.

"I hope you don't think I'd do such a thing as that?" said Philip, virtuously. "But I am afraid it is my fault, for I left the outside door unlocked all night. Any one might have come in and stolen the bonds."

"That is true; but why didn't they take more, or all? You didn't see any one round when you went to bed, did you?"

"Yes, I did," answered Philip, with well-feigned eagerness. "Just as I was going to bed, I went into the next room, where the trunk is, and, turning to look out of the window, I was quite startled to see Harry Gilbert's face close to the window. The light shining through the doorway was quite strong enough for him to see the trunk and keys lying on your desk. It's as sure as can be that he took the bonds. You see, he could slip in after I went upstairs, and there was nothing to prevent. He might have been lurking around when you were examin-

ing the bonds last night, and saw you place them back in the envelope."

"What is all this about?" asked Mrs. Ross, entering the room at this point.

It was explained to her, and she instantly adopted her son's view.

"Phil's hit the nail on the head, I do believe," she said. "I didn't think he was so sharp. Colonel Ross, I have no doubt the Gilbert boy took the bonds."

"Then, why didn't he take more?" asked Ross.

"Oh, he got frightened—thought he heard a noise, or perhaps he thought it would not be discovered so quick if he only took two. There are reasons enough."

Philip and Mrs. Ross assumed so confident a tone that Colonel Ross, though at first inclined to discredit the charge, ended by believing it very probable.

"This thing must be attended to," he said.

"What are you going to do about it, pa?"

"I shall go before Justice Slocum, and get a warrant to search Widow Gilbert's house. If I find anything, I shall have Harry arrested."

"Now, you're in a scrape, Harry Gilbert," said Philip to himself, exultantly.

"I guess I'll go along with you, pa," he said, aloud, "and see if James Congreve has got back from the city."



## CHAPTER XXXVI

## HARRY IS CHARGED WITH THEFT

PHILIP called at the hotel, and inquired, with considerable confidence, if "Mr. Congreve" was in.

"He has not returned," answered the landlord.

"Then he won't be back to-night," said Philip, feeling considerably disappointed.

"No; the last train is in."

"I wonder if he had any trouble in selling the bonds," thought Philip; but this thought was one to which he didn't think it prudent to give expression.

He walked home slowly, while Colonel Ross kept on his way to the modest home of the Gilberts. We will precede him.

The little family was gathered in the plain sitting-room. There were but three—Mrs. Gilbert, Harry and Uncle Obed.

The old man—to begin with the oldest first—was sitting in a rocking chair, with his hands folded in his lap, and an expression of placid contentment on his face. He had reached the age when rest is

agreeable, and was satisfied to sit through the evening, now watching Harry or his mother, and now occupied with thoughts of earlier days and distant scenes. He was thoroughly satisfied with the new home he had found, plain and humble though it was. Indeed, perhaps, for that very reason, it suited him better.

Mrs. Gilbert was sewing. She had time enough to sew for some of her neighbors, and in that way earned a moderate sum for herself, though, as the family was now situated, she could have dispensed with it.

Harry was reading a "Life of Benjamin Franklin," which he had taken from the Sunday school library, and was evidently deeply interested in it.

"What are you reading, Harry?" asked the old man, after a while.

"Franklin's life, Uncle Obed."

"You couldn't read anything better. Old Ben is a good model for American boys. He was a great man."

"So he was, Uncle Obed; and he began poor, too."

"Sarten, sarten! Poor boys make the smartest men—that's my observation."

"Then I've got one thing in my favor," said Harry, smiling.

"And you will succeed, too; I make no doubt of it. You've made a pretty good beginning already."

"Thank you, Uncle Obed, for your favorable opinion. I hope I shall deserve it."

"You're worth half a dozen boys like Philip Ross. I reckon he'll never amount to much."

"He doesn't think so," said Harry, smiling. "He thinks himself a very important character."

"Like enough! He looks like it. He doesn't care to own me as a relation."

"It would be different if you were rich, Uncle Obed."

"Mebbe so. I think so myself. Thank the Lord, I ain't beholden to him or his family for any favors. They wanted to send me home to Illinoy. I was too unfashionable for them, I expect, but I've found a home—yes, I've found a good home."

"I am glad we succeeded in making it comfortable for you, Mr. Wilkins," said Mrs. Gilbert, looking up from her sewing.

"You do, ma'am," said the old man. "I ain't been so well taken care of for years as I am now. I wish I could do something to show my gratitude."

"The money you pay us is of great service. It makes the largest part of our income. I am only afraid you pay too much."

"No, I don't," said Uncle Obed. "Money isn't of much vally, compared with a good home. If I ain't as rich as my niece, I can afford to pay fair board. When a man's turned seventy, as I have,

the best money can do for him is to give him a happy home."

Mrs. Gilbert and Harry were pleased to find their boarder so contented. The money he paid weekly, with unvarying punctuality, made things easy for the widow, and relieved her of the anxiety which she had constantly felt before his arrival.

The conversation above recorded was scarcely over, when a knock was heard at the front door—a sharp, peremptory knock—as of one who demanded admittance, rather than requested it.

All looked up, with some surprise, for it was now eight o'clock, and they did not often have evening callers.

"I will go to the door, mother," said Harry. "You need not interrupt your sewing."

So Harry opened the outer door, and, considerably to his surprise, saw standing on the step the dignified figure of Colonel Ross.

"Colonel Ross!" he exclaimed, in surprise.

"I will come in a few minutes," said the Colonel, stiffly.

"Certainly, sir. Excuse my not inviting you."

"It is very excusable—under the circumstances," said the Colonel, stiffly.

"What does he mean?" thought Harry. "I can't tell what circumstances he refers to."

"Mother," said he, opening the door of the sitting-room, "here is Colonel Ross."

"Take a seat, Colonel Ross," said the widow, politely.

Colonel Ross seated himself deliberately in a chair near his wife's uncle.

"Glad to see you, Mr. Ross," said Uncle Obed, thinking the visit was meant for him. "You're very kind to look in on an old man."

"I—well, my visit this evening has a different object."

"Oh, come to see Mrs. Gilbert! Well, how's Lucinda?"

"Mrs. Ross is enjoying her usual health," said Colonel Ross, ceremoniously.

"Glad to hear it," said the old man. "She hasn't called on me yet, though I'm the only relation she's got within a thousand miles."

"Mrs. Ross is very much occupied," said her husband, coldly. "However, you will excuse me if I proceed to the object of my visit. I regret to say that last evening the trunk in which I keep a part of my securities was opened, and two government bonds abstracted."

"You don't say so!" exclaimed Mr. Wilkins, really surprised. "When did it happen?"

"Sometime in the evening or night. The outer door was left unlocked, through the neglect of my son, Philip, who sat up later than his mother or myself. Unfortunately, I had myself carelessly left my bunch of keys, including the key to this

trunk, on my desk, so that the thief found his work very easy."

"You and Philip were both careless. Have you got track of the rogue?"

"I think I have," answered Colonel Ross, in a significant tone.

"I'm glad on't. These fellows ought to be caught. I don't have much sympathy for a thief."

"I am glad to hear you say so," said Colonel Ross.

"You didn't think I had, did you?" asked the old man, puzzled.

"I thought you might have, when you came to know who it was I suspect."

"I don't see as that will make any difference. Who is it?"

"My son, just before retiring, saw a person prowling round the house, and looking into the window. Doubtless, he saw the bunch of keys, and was tempted to enter and steal the bonds."

"Have you arrested him?"

"Not yet; but probably I shall before long."

"Who is it, Colonel Ross?" asked Mrs. Gilbert, with interest.

"Madam," said the Colonel, slowly, "it pains me to say that the person seen prowling round my house, and looking in at my window, was your son, Harry!"

"Harry!" ejaculated the widow, scarcely thinking she had heard aright.

"It's ridiculous!" exclaimed Uncle Obed.

"Colonel Ross," said Harry, rising to his feet, and confronting the visitor, with clear eyes and an expression of honest indignation, "do you mean to say that you suspect me of stealing any of your property?"

"Young man, I advise you not to be impudent or brazen-faced. Do you mean to deny that you were near my house last evening between half-past nine and ten o'clock?"

"No, I don't. I did pass your house about that time."

"I am glad you have the sense to own it. You may as well confess the rest—that you entered through the unlocked door, opened my small trunk, and took out two government bonds of a hundred dollars each."

"Whoever charges me with that utters a falsehood," said Harry, boldly. "I passed your house, but I did not enter it, and did not even look in the window, and it is news to me that the door was unlocked, or the keys on the desk. In fact, I didn't know you had a trunk in which you kept your bonds."

"Of course you deny it," said Colonel Ross, "but I think it entirely likely that the stolen bonds are at this very moment hidden beneath this roof."

## CHAPTER XXXVII

## SEARCHING THE COTTAGE

"COLONEL ROSS, your suspicions are very insulting and entirely unwarranted," said the Widow Gilbert, with a flush on her usually pale cheek.

"Of course I knew you would not believe anything against your son, whom you believe to be a model," said Colonel Ross, with a sneer.

"So he is—a model!" said the widow, warmly.

"Then all I can say is that there is a strong reason to suspect that this model son of yours is a thief."

"I deny it."

"I notice, however, that you are afraid to have the house searched."

"I have never expressed any unwillingness."

"Then I understand that you give your consent."

"I do."

"Very well. Then allow me to call in a party not interested, who will attend to that duty."

Colonel Ross went to the outer door, and, opening it, called:



"Constable, you are wanted!"

At this summons a tall, stout man—Mr. Rogers, the village constable—came forward, as it seemed, rather reluctantly.

"Constable," said Colonel Ross, "Mrs. Gilbert has given her consent to have the house searched for the bonds which were abstracted from my trunk last evening."

"Mr. Rogers," said Mrs. Gilbert, who knew the constable well, "Colonel Ross has made a cruel and unwarranted charge against Harry. I hope you don't believe he is a thief."

"I don't," said the constable, bluntly. "I've known your boy ever since he was a baby, and I never knew him to do a mean thing."

"Constable," said Colonel Ross, angrily, "it does not become you to screen the guilty or make excuses for him."

"It strikes me you're rather too fast, Colonel Ross, in making him out guilty. What proof have you of it?"

"My son's word."

"Oh!" said the constable, expressively.

"You have only to do your duty and search the house, and I venture to predict that the evidence will be forthcoming that will convince even you."

"Mrs. Gilbert," said the constable, "I hope you'll excuse me for obeying the Colonel. I have to do it, you know."

"Do your duty, Mr. Rogers. We are not afraid to have the house searched from top to bottom."

"I don't want to disturb your things, Mrs. Gilbert. Suppose you go round and open everything to us."

"If that will be satisfactory to Colonel Ross. I want him satisfied."

"As long as I am present, with a right to examine, I shall not object."

"It seems to me, Colonel Ross," remarked Uncle Obed, "you are not treating the boy right."

"It is immaterial to me what you think, Mr. Wilkins," replied the Colonel, with asperity.

"Mebbe so," said the old man. "I calculate it won't always be so. The time may come when you will care more for my opinion."

"You flatter yourself unduly, Mr. Wilkins, I assure you."

"Mebbe so," answered the old man, not appearing at all discomposed by the rude tone of his niece's husband.

"We will begin here, gentlemen," said Mrs. Gilbert.

So saying, she went about from place to place down below, opening whatever drawers there were, even in the pantry, and revealing nothing that looked like the bonds.

"I didn't expect they were downstairs," said the Colonel.

"Then we will go upstairs. You shall not say that we have concealed anything or shrunk from any investigation."

"Very well."

Mrs. Gilbert thereupon led the way upstairs, and the search began. Finally, they came to her own bureau. The upper drawer was opened, and the sharp eyes of the Colonel detected a large envelope. It was the one that contained the bonds which had been presented to Harry for his service in ferreting out the burglars in the wood.

Singular as it may seem, neither Harry nor his mother had thought of them, and the false inference that might be drawn from their discovery. It was natural, therefore, that each should look startled and discomposed.

"Ha! what have we here?" demanded Colonel Ross, clutching the envelope.

"Those are my property," said Harry, who was the first to recover his self-possession.

"I will take the liberty to examine. Ha! government bonds, as I live. Constable, what do you say now?" demanded the Colonel, triumphantly.

The constable, who knew nothing of Harry's gift, looked very uncomfortable indeed. Despite his belief in Harry's honesty, he was staggered by this apparent evidence to the contrary.

"What is this, Mrs. Gilbert?" he asked.

"They are bonds belonging to Harry. He speaks the truth."

"A likely story," exclaimed Colonel Ross. "Really, Mrs. Gilbert, your conduct is most extraordinary. I begin to think you had some knowledge of your son's act."

"Colonel Ross, don't you dare to insult my mother," said Harry, so fiercely that the Colonel retreated a little, under the impression that our hero intended to make an insult upon him.

"Be careful, boy," he warned. "I've caught you red-handed in the commission of a crime that may send you to State's prison. You'd better take heed what you say!"

"Mr. Rogers," said Mrs. Gilbert, "that envelope contains government bonds that belong to my son. Ask Colonel Ross how many he lost."

"Two bonds of a hundred dollars each," answered the Colonel. "And here they are," he continued, producing two bonds of that denomination from the envelope.

"Look again. See if there are no more," said Harry.

The Colonel, evidently surprised, produced a fifty.

"Do you mean to say that you lost that, also?" inquired Harry.

"No," replied the Colonel, evidently puzzled; "you must have got that from somewhere else."

"I got the whole somewhere else," said Harry.

"It is entirely useless, Harry Gilbert, to attempt to impose upon me by any such ridiculous story. As to the extra bond, I don't know where it came from. Perhaps your mother had it before. It doesn't alter the fact that I have found my stolen bonds in your possession."

"When did you lose your bonds?" asked Uncle Obed, who thought it time to "put in his oar," as he afterward expressed it.

"Last evening."

"You're sure you had 'em up to that time, are you?"

"Yes; I looked them over, and counted them early in the evening."

"Then, all I can say is that the bonds you've got in your hands have been in the house several days. Harry showed them to me when he first got 'em."

"Really, Mr. Wilkins, I don't like to doubt the word of an old man like you; but, sir, your statement is absolutely incredible."

"It is true," said Mrs. Gilbert. "I, too, assert the same thing."

"Then you are all in a conspiracy," said Colonel Ross, in a passion.

"And you have evidently plotted the ruin of an innocent boy," said Mrs. Gilbert, with spirit.

"You have always pretended to be poor," continued Colonel Ross, "and now you expect me to be-

lieve that your son owns nearly three hundred dollars' worth of bonds!"

"I do, for it is true."

"Where did he get them?"

"They were given him."

"Utterly absurd! People don't often give boys such presents as that. Constable, I call on you to arrest that boy."

"Where is your warrant, Colonel?"

"Arrest him on suspicion."

"I could not do it."

"Then you mean to connive at his escape?"

"No; I'll stay here to-night, if you insist upon it."

"Do so, and I will take the bonds."

"Lay them down, Colonel Ross; they are my property!" said Harry, sternly.

"You can't be allowed to take 'em, Colonel, till you prove that they are yours. One you admit is not," said the constable.

"It doesn't matter much," replied the Colonel, discomfited. "They will find their way back to me soon. This boy won't take on so high a tone to-morrow."

## CHAPTER XXXVIII

## PHILIP'S SURPRISE

"WHERE did that other bond come from?" thought Colonel Ross, as he wended his way homeward. "I can't understand it. Perhaps the boy took it from some one else. It is just possible that his mother may have owned a fifty-dollar bond."

To do Colonel Ross justice, he really thought that the bonds he had discovered were his own, and he was convinced, by what his son had told him, that Harry had really entered his house on the night when the outer door had been left open and abstracted them.

Philip, disappointed at not finding his friend Congreve at the hotel, took his way home, and was already in the house when his father returned. He was naturally curious to hear something of the result of his errand.

"Well, father," he said, eagerly, as the Colonel entered the room where he was seated, "what luck did you have?"

"I found the bonds," said his father, briefly.

Nothing could have astonished Philip more, knowing what he did as to the manner in which they had really been disposed of. He looked the picture of amazement.

"Found the bonds!" he ejaculated.

"Certainly! What is there remarkable about that?"

"And Harry Gilbert really had them?" said Philip, not knowing what to think.

"Of course!"

"Where were they found?"

"In the bureau drawer in his mother's room."

"What can it mean?" thought Philip, in a whirl of amazement. "I gave them to Congreve to carry to New York, and how in the world could Gilbert have got hold of them? There must be some mistake somewhere."

"What did Harry say when you found the bonds?" he asked.

"He denied that they were mine; said they were his."

"But where could he get them?"

"That is the question. He said they were given to him, or some such ridiculous nonsense, and his mother actually backed him up in this preposterous statement."

"I was never so astonished in the whole course of my life!" said Philip; and he spoke the honest truth.



"You, my son, are entitled to great credit for your vigilance, and you apprising me that the boy was prowling about the house on the evening in question. I shall make you a present of ten dollars."

"Oh, thank you, father," said Philip, his eyes expressing his delight, as his father drew from his pocketbook two five-dollar bills and placed them in his hand.

"At any rate, it has turned out pretty lucky for me," he thought to himself. "All the same, it is a puzzle where those bonds came from. Congreve wouldn't go and give them to Harry? No, of course not! Well, the best I can do is to keep mum."

"There is one circumstance that rather puzzles me," said the Colonel, reflectively.

"What is it, father?"

"I only miss two hundred-dollar bonds, and I found in the boy's possession a fifty-dollar bond in addition. That is certainly singular."

"So it is," said Philip, showing his own surprise.

"He must have stolen that from some other party," continued the Colonel.

"As like as not," chimed in Philip, glibly. "Have you got the bonds with you?" he asked, after a pause. "Did you bring them back?"

"No. Rogers, the constable, said I could not take them till I had proved them to be my prop-

erty. He is a stupid old countryman, and knows nothing about law. He was evidently prejudiced in favor of the Gilberts."

"Well, what did you do with Harry?"

"He ought to have been taken to the lockup, but the constable didn't want to do it, and I agreed that he might stay in the house, under guard of the constable, of course, for I apprehended the boy might make an effort to run away."

"Did he seem much frightened?" asked Philip, curiously.

"No; he seemed very indignant at being suspected. Of course, it was all put on. He was actually insolent, and defied me to take the bonds. I suppose he thought he could put me off the scent by his bravado."

"What are you going to do to-morrow?" asked Philip.

"I shall have him taken before a magistrate, and shall formally charge him with the theft."

"What did Uncle Obed say?" inquired Philip, suddenly.

"It really is of very little consequence what that old man said," returned Colonel Ross, stiffly. "Of course, he sided with the Gilberts, and he actually had the effrontery to say that the bonds had been in the house for several days."

"He couldn't have given the bonds to Harry, could he?"

"Of course not. The man is a pauper, or about the same as one. Every day I expect he will come to me to ask pecuniary assistance."

"Will you give him any money if he does?"

"Yes; enough to get him back to Illinois. He ought never to have left there."

Philip went to bed in a state of wonderment, but at the same time in a state of satisfaction. Suspicion had been diverted from him, the real culprit, and the boy whom he hated more than any other was likely to suffer for his misdeeds.

If he had had a conscience, this thought ought to have made him uncomfortable, but it did not. He thought, rather, that under cover of this charge made against another, he and Congreve would be free to use the proceeds of the stolen bonds, and he began even to plan in what way he would spend his portion.

Meanwhile, a very different scene took place in the cottage of the Gilberts, after the Colonel had taken his leave.

"I hope, Mr. Rogers," said Mrs. Gilbert to the constable, "you don't believe my boy guilty of this base deed which the colonel charges upon him?"

"I've always thought highly of Harry, ma'am," said the constable, "and I can't think now he'd take anything that wasn't his; but it is rather strange that them bonds should be found in this house now, ain't it?"

"No, indeed. Is the Colonel the only man in town that owns bonds?"

"I expect not; though, so far as my own experience goes, I know I ain't got any. I always thought—begging your pardon, Mrs. Gilbert—that you was poor, and now what am I to think?"

"You needn't think I am rich; but Harry owns those bonds, and they are the reward of his own good conduct. Would you like to hear how he came by them?"

"Yes, ma'am, if you don't mind telling me."

"I don't mind telling you, though I didn't choose to tell the Colonel."

Whereupon, Mrs. Gilbert related the story of the tin box secreted in the wood, and how, through Harry's prompt action, those who had purloined it had been brought to justice.

"You've got a smart boy, Mrs. Gilbert," said the constable, admiringly. "I couldn't have done as well myself. There won't be any difficulty in clearing Harry now."

"What would you advise, Mr. Rogers?"

"Nothing at present; but if we find it necessary to-morrow, we can get that lawyer's testimony, which will certainly clear Harry of this charge."

## CHAPTER XXXIX

## HOW CONGREVE SUCCEEDED

PHILIP would not have felt flattered if he had been able to read the thoughts of his friend James Congreve, when the latter was riding away from the village where he had been boarding, toward the great city.

"That's the last I shall ever see of the young snob, I hope," he said to himself. "I've got all I can out of him, and now I wash my hands of him. I wish him joy of waiting for me to-night. It'll be many a long day before he sees me or the balance of the bonds."

James Congreve settled back in his seat, bought a paper from the paper boy on the train, and began to read in a very comfortable frame of mind.

From time to time he put his hand on the inside pocket in which he had placed the bonds, to make sure of their safety, for no one knew better than he that there were dishonest persons to be met with who were willing to appropriate valuables belonging to others.

It was some time since he had been so well off as he would be when he had converted these bonds into money. Indeed, all the summer long he had been short of funds, or he would not have spent so long a time in a country village, which to him was dull and afforded him a small field for his peculiar talents.

Arriving in New York, Congreve took his way to Wall Street. Here it was that he expected to get rid of the bonds, or, rather, exchange them for greenbacks.

In this street brokers' and bankers' offices abound, and all negotiable securities readily find a purchaser. He stepped into an office nearly opposite the opening of New Street, and, approaching the counter, said, as he drew out his bonds:

"What are you paying for government sixes?"

"Let me see the date," said the clerk. He spread open the bonds, and then answered: "One hundred and fifteen and three-eighths."

"Very well," replied Congreve. "I will sell them."

The clerk took them and stepped to the desk, to make an entry of the purchase.

"What name?" he asked, turning to Congreve.

"John Baker," said Congreve, with momentary hesitation.

For obvious reasons, he thought it best not to

mention his own name, as trouble might possibly come from the possession of the bonds.

"Shall I give you a check?" was the next question.

"I would prefer the money," answered Congreve.

"Go to the cashier's window, and he will attend to you."

"Not much trouble about that," thought Congreve, complacently, when he was startled by a voice at his elbow.

"How are you, Congreve?"

Looking around hastily, he saw a hand extended, and recognized a young man who had at one time been a fellow-boarder with him in Fourteenth Street. It is safe to say that James Congreve wished him anywhere else at that most unfortunate time.

"Hush!" said he, in a subdued whisper; "I will speak to you outside."

He hoped the clerk had not heard the name by which he had been addressed; but he hoped in vain. The latter, pausing in his writing, came to the counter and said:

"Didn't this gentleman call you Congreve?"

"Yes," admitted Congreve, uneasily.

"You just gave your name as John Baker."

"Oh, no! That is, I didn't say my name was

John Baker. That is the gentleman for whom I am selling the bonds."

"Then they do not belong to you?"

"No."

"Where does Mr. Baker live?"

"In New Haven," answered Congreve, glibly, for he had a ready invention.

"We do not care to buy," said the clerk, coldly, for there was something in Congreve's manner which made him suspicious.

"Really," said Congreve, laughing in a constrained manner, "you appear to be very cautious."

"We have to be."

"Shall I tell Mr. Baker it will be necessary for him to come to New York in person to dispose of his bonds? He is my uncle, and I simply am doing him a favor in disposing of them."

"Very possibly; but I think we won't purchase them."

"Oh, well! I can carry them elsewhere," said Congreve, raging inwardly.

His acquaintance, whose recognition had interfered with his plans, followed him to the door, in rather a perplexed frame of mind.

"Where have you been all summer, Congreve?" he asked, thinking it best to ignore the scene which he had just witnessed.

"None of your business," answered Congreve, sharply.



"What does this mean?" asked the young man, in astonishment.

"It means, sir, that I do not wish to keep up my acquaintance with you. Didn't you know any better than to blurt out my name just now, and so get me into trouble?"

"If you are ashamed to appear under your real name, I don't care to know you," answered the young man, with spirit. "So, good-morning to you, Mr. Congreve, or Mr. Baker, or whatever else you call yourself."

"Good riddance," said Congreve.

"There's something wrong about that fellow," said Tom Norcross to himself, as he looked after Congreve, while the latter was crossing the street. "I don't believe he came by those bonds honestly. His manner was certainly very suspicious."

Congreve entered another banking house, and here he had no difficulty in disposing of his bonds. He came out with two hundred and thirty dollars in his pocket, and feeling less irritable than before.

"So that's done," he said to himself, "and I am well provided with money for the present. Now I must make up for lost time, and try to enjoy myself a little. I was nearly moped to death in that dull country village, with no better company than a young snob. Now to see life!"

First of all, Congreve installed himself at a fashionable boarding house uptown. Then he pur-

chased a seat for the evening's performance at Wallack's Theater, and then sought out some of his old companions in haunts where he knew they were likely to be found. He had a few games of cards, in which his luck varied. He rose from the card table a loser in the sum of twenty-five dollars.

"That is unlucky," thought Congreve. "However, I've got two hundred dollars left. I must be more cautious, or my money won't last long."

Still, he felt in tolerably good spirits when he went to the theater, and enjoyed the performance about as much as if his pleasures were bought with money honestly earned.

It so happened that the clerk at the first banking house who had refused to purchase the bonds sat two rows behind him, and easily recognized his customer of the morning.

"I suspect Mr. Baker, alias Congreve, has disposed of his bonds," he thought to himself. "I am really curious to know whether he had any right to sell them."

From time to time this thought came back to the clerk, till he formed a resolution quietly to follow Congreve, after the close of the performance, and ascertain where he lived.

Congreve, seated in front, was not aware of the presence of the clerk, or he might have taken measures to defeat his design.

When James Congreve left the theater, he was

at first inclined to stop at Delmonico's on the way uptown, and indulge in a little refreshment; but he felt somewhat fatigued with his day's travel, and, after a moment's indecision, concluded instead to return at once to his boarding place.

"He lives in a nice house," said the clerk to himself. "Let me notice the number. I may find it desirable to know where to find him."

To anticipate matters a little, word came to New York in the afternoon of the next day that two bonds, the numbers of which were given, had been stolen from Colonel Ross, and search was made for the young man who was suspected of having negotiated them. The clerk, who, previous to returning the bonds to Congreve, had taken down the numbers, at once identified them as the ones referred to, and gave information to the police.

The result was that just as Congreve was sitting down to supper on the evening of the second day, he was informed that a man wished to see him at the door. On answering the call, he saw before him a small man, of quiet manner, dressed in a sober suit of black.

"Your name is Congreve, I believe?" he said, politely.

"Yes, sir," answered James, in a hesitating tone.

"Then I must trouble you to go with me."

"I have just sat down to supper."

"I am really sorry to disturb you, but you are

charged with selling two stolen bonds in Wall Street yesterday."

"There is some mistake," said Congreve, hurriedly. "Colonel Ross sent me the bonds by his son, with a request that I would sell them for him."

"Glad to hear it," said the detective, laconically. "Then you will be able to clear yourself. Meanwhile, you must come with me."

And James Congreve spent the night in a boarding house by no means fashionable.

## CHAPTER XL

## PREPARING TO PROSECUTE

"I AM going to the bottom of this affair," said Colonel Ross, as he sipped his second cup of coffee at the breakfast table the next morning. "The Gilbert boy must suffer the consequences of his crime."

"Will he be sent to prison, pa?" inquired Philip.

"It is a State's prison offense, my son," answered his father.

Was it on Harry's account that Philip suddenly turned pale and looked nervous? I cannot credit him with a sufficient amount of feeling for another. He could not help recalling the fact that it was he and not Harry who had been guilty of this State's prison offense.

"However, the thing can't possibly be traced to me," he reflected, somewhat more comfortable in mind. "I don't know as I care whether Harry Gilbert goes to prison or not. He is very proud and stuck-up, and it will take down his pride."

"I commend your decision," said Mrs. Ross, to

her husband. "In my opinion, mercy would be misplaced in such a case as this. The boy who is degraded enough to steal is likely to continue in his criminal course, and the sooner he is punished the better."

There was something in this remark, also, that made Philip wince.

"Where will Harry Gilbert be tried?" asked Philip.

"Before Squire Davis. I directed the constable to carry him round there at nine o'clock this morning."

"May I go, too?"

"Yes; your testimony will be needed to show that the boy was prowling around our house on the evening in question."

"Very well," answered Philip, with satisfaction. "I'll go along with you."

"Do so, my son."

As it was not yet time to go to the office of the justice, Philip stepped out into the yard, where Tom Calder, the stable boy, was washing a carriage.

"I guess I'll tell him the news," thought Philip. "Tom," he said, "we've discovered who stole the bonds the other night."

"Have you?" asked Tom, with a queer smile.

"Yes. Would you like to know who it is?"

"Uncommon."

"It's Harry Gilbert."

Tom Calder pursed up his lips in genuine amazement, and emitted a shrill whistle.

"You don't say!" he exclaimed.

"Yes," said Philip, complacently. "The governor had the house searched—Widow Gilbert's, of course—and he found the bonds there."

"That beats all I ever heard!" ejaculated Tom.

"Oh, it doesn't surprise me at all!" said Philip, carelessly. "I've long suspected Harry Gilbert of being dishonest."

"I don't believe it, for my part," said Tom, manfully standing by a boy who, on more than one occasion, had done him a favor. "Harry Gilbert is as honest a boy as there is in town."

"Your opinion isn't of much importance," said Philip, in a tone of superiority, "and it won't save the Gilbert boy from going to State's prison."

"Do you mean to say the one who took the bonds will have to go to State's prison?"

"Yes; that's what father says, and he knows a good deal about the law."

"Maybe he'll change his mind," said Tom Calder, in a peculiar tone. "When is the trial coming off?"

"This morning, at nine o'clock, at the office of Squire Davis."

Tom nodded his head thoughtfully, but only said:

"Are you going to be there?"

"Yes."

"What time is it now?"

"Quarter past eight."

"Somebody else will be there," said Tom to himself; and Philip left him and went back into the house.



## CHAPTER XLI

## HARRY MANAGES HIS OWN CASE

TRIAL JUSTICE DAVIS sat in his office. He was a man of sixty, with a keen but not unbenevolent face, looking all the more sagacious, perhaps, because of a pair of gold spectacles which surmounted his nose. He had been apprised of the trial at which he was expected to preside, and he looked surprised and regretful.

"I can't believe that boy is guilty," he said to himself. "I have always looked upon him as one of the best boys in town."

At nine, the principal parties concerned entered the office. First, Colonel Ross and Philip walked in—Philip with an attempt to be at ease, but with a perceptibly nervous air, notwithstanding.

Harry Gilbert entered, walking beside the constable. Behind him followed his mother and Uncle Obed. Mrs. Gilbert looked anxious, though the constable assured her that there was no need of it, and that Harry would be triumphantly acquitted. Harry did not look in the least frightened, but seemed much more at ease than Philip.

A trial before a police justice in a country town is much more informal than in a city, and this should be remembered by those who read this chapter.

"What charge do you bring against Harry Gilbert, Colonel?" asked the justice.

"I charge him with entering my house on the evening of the nineteenth instant, opening the small trunk in which I keep my valuable papers and securities, and abstracting therefrom two United States Government bonds, of the par value of a hundred dollars each."

"You hear the charge, Harry," said the justice. "Are you guilty or not guilty?"

"Not guilty," answered Harry, in clear, ringing accents, surveying the Colonel proudly.

"You ought to have some one to defend you," said the justice.

"I will defend myself," said Harry, resolutely.

"Very well. Colonel Ross, I will hear your testimony."

The Colonel, being sworn, testified that he had missed the bonds on the morning afterward, and had been led, by what his son told him, to suspect Harry Gilbert. He had gone to the cottage, and found the bonds. He was about to rehearse Philip's information, but the justice stopped him, and said he would hear Philip in person.

"Have you any question to ask the witness?" asked the justice of Harry.

"Can I reserve my questions?" asked Harry.

"Yes; if you desire it."

Philip was next sworn. He testified that, on the evening in question, he had seen Harry prowling round the house, just before going up to bed.

"How did you happen to sit up so late?" asked Harry.

"That's my affair," replied Philip, haughtily.

"Answer!" thundered the justice, angrily. "No insolence here, sir!"

"I was reading," said Philip, frightened.

"Did you go into the room where the trunk was?" asked Harry, in his capacity as lawyer.

"Ye-es."

"Did you open the trunk?"

"No," answered Philip, nervously.

"I protest against the prisoner's insolence to my son," exclaimed Colonel Ross, angrily.

"It is a question he has a right to ask," said the justice, calmly.

"Did you see the keys which your father left on his desk?" asked Harry.

"No," answered Philip, ill at ease.

"I should now like to question Colonel Ross," said Harry.

The Colonel, with a curl of the lip, took the stand again.

"Really," he said, "it looks as if my son and I were on trial instead of the prisoner."

"Colonel Ross, you must be aware that I am according Harry no unusual privileges. It is as a lawyer—his own advocate—that he questions you."

"Go on," said the Colonel, haughtily.

"Colonel Ross," continued Harry, "do you generally keep a list of the numbers on your bonds?"

"Of course!"

"Can you furnish the numbers of the bonds that were taken from you?"

"I can give the numbers of the whole ten bonds. I don't know which were taken. I have not compared my list with those that remain."

"Have you the numbers with you?"

"Yes, I have them in my notebook."

"Will you be kind enough to repeat them so that the court may take them down?"

"Certainly! though I don't see what good that will do."

"It is of material importance," said the justice, nodding approval.

Colonel Ross drew from his inside coat pocket a large wallet, and, opening it, took out a memorandum, from which he read as follows:

"The numbers run from 17,810 to 17,817, inclusive."

"Then the stolen bonds are somewhere between those numbers?" said Harry.

"Of course."

Harry turned to the constable.

"Mr. Rogers," he said, "have you the bonds which were found at our house?"

"Yes," answered the constable.

"Will you hand them to Squire Davis, and ask him to read off the numbers?"

"You will do as Harry requests you," said the justice.

The constable placed the envelope in his hands, and Justice Davis, opening it, drew out three bonds.

"I find two one-hundred-dollar bonds," he said, "and one fifty-dollar bond."

"The two hundred-dollar bonds are mine," said Colonel Ross.

"That is, you claim them," said the justice, cautiously. "I will read the numbers.

"This one," he proceeded, unfolding one, "is numbered 9,867, and the other"—after a pause—"11,402. It strikes me, Colonel Ross, that you will have to look further for your bonds."

If such a dignified-looking man as Colonel Ross could look foolish, the Colonel looked so at that moment. He realized that he had made a ridiculous exhibition of himself, and he felt mortified to think that he had been so careless as not to have

thought of comparing the numbers of the bonds the moment he had discovered them in Harry Gilbert's possession.

"Harry Gilbert is honorably discharged, and the bonds are restored to him," said the justice.

"Thank you, sir," said Harry, glancing not without natural exultation, at Colonel Ross and Philip.

Philip, by the way, looked as uncomfortable as his father.

Here there was an unexpected and startling interruption.

"I can tell Colonel Ross all about it!" said a distinct voice from near the door.

"Come forward then and give your information," said the justice.

This call was answered by Tom Calder, who elbowed his way to the front, dressed in his farm attire, and in his shirt sleeves.

Philip's face might have been observed to grow pale when he heard Tom's voice, and he looked decidedly sick when the boy walked up to give his testimony. Unobserved by any one, for all eyes were fixed upon Tom, he edged to the door, and slipped out, in an agony of apprehension, for he foresaw what was coming.

"Proceed," said the justice.

"That night when the Colonel missed the bonds," began Tom, "I was coming home some time after nine, when I happened to look into the window, and

there I saw Phil Ross with his father's little trunk open before him. I saw him take out a couple of bonds, and slip them into his inside pocket. Then he carefully locked the trunk again, laid the keys on the desk, and left the room. That's all I saw."

"It's a falsehood!" ejaculated Colonel Ross, furiously.

"You just ask Phil about it, Colonel," said Tom, composedly.

Colonel Ross looked around for Philip, but no Philip was to be seen.

"I seed him slip out of the door just as Tom was beginnin' to talk," said a small urchin.

Overcome with mortification, and compelled to suspect that Tom's story was true, Colonel Ross hurried home, where he found Philip.

Sternly calling him to account, the Colonel extorted a confession, not only that he had taken the bonds, but what had become of them. The result was that information was sent to the police of New York, and James Congreve was arrested.

I may as well finish this part of the story by saying that Congreve was compelled to give up what remained of his ill-gotten gains, but Colonel Ross failed to prosecute him, because he could not do so without involving his own son also. It was only two months, however, before Congreve was detected in a more serious affair, for which he was forced to stand trial, and is even now serving a

term of imprisonment, received as a penalty for the later crime.

As for Philip, he was so mortified and shamed by the exposure of his dishonesty, and his attempt to fix the crime upon another, that he asked his father to send him to a boarding school at a distance, and his request was complied with.

Tom Calder was immediately discharged by Colonel Ross, but within a week he was engaged elsewhere at an advanced salary. His new employer was Mr. Obed Wilkins, better known to us as Uncle Obed.

If this statement excites surprise, I must refer my readers to the next chapter for an explanation.



## CHAPTER XLII

## CONCLUSION

THE house of Colonel Ross was the finest in the village, with one exception. A certain Mr. Carrington, a city merchant, had, five years before, built a country villa surpassing it, a little distance away on the same street.

It was provided with handsome grounds, and originally cost, everything included, thirty-five thousand dollars, exclusive of furniture.

It was the day after Harry's triumphant acquittal that Uncle Obed remarked, casually:

"I hear that Mr. Carrington is anxious to sell his estate."

"I am not surprised," answered Mrs. Gilbert. "He bought it chiefly to please a young wife, and her sudden death sadly disturbed all his plans."

"I have made some inquiries," continued Uncle Obed, "and find that he is willing to sell everything, even to the furniture, for fifteen thousand dollars."

"That is a great bargain, for he could scarcely have paid less than forty thousand dollars for the whole."

"I have about decided to buy the place," said Mr. Wilkins, quietly.

"What!" exclaimed Mrs. Gilbert and Harry, in concert.

"Since you both think it will be a good bargain, I think I will buy it," continued Uncle Obed, his eyes twinkling.

"That's a good joke," said Harry.

"No joke at all, as you will find."

"You don't mean to say you can afford to buy such a place?" said Harry, in amazement.

"I consider myself worth seventy-five thousand dollars," said Mr. Wilkins.

Mrs. Gilbert and Harry stared at him in undisguised astonishment.

"I thought you were a very poor man," said the widow.

"I know you did," said Uncle Obed, laughing.

"What will Colonel Ross say?" wondered Harry.

"I feel more interested in what my niece will say," said the old man.

"I am afraid they will take you away from us, Uncle Obed, when they find out that you are rich."

"Not against my will, I think," replied the old man, with quiet determination.

"They won't want to send you back to Illinois now."

"I don't know but they will, when they find I won't go with them."

"Do you think of moving into the new house, Mr. Wilkins?" asked Mrs. Gilbert, anxiously.

"Yes, I think I shall."

"We shall be sorry to lose you," she said, soberly.

"You are not going to lose me," assured Uncle Obed. "Do you think I am going to live alone? I should die of loneliness. No! You and Harry go with me, and I shall take the liberty of paying all the expenses of housekeeping."

"How kind you are, Uncle Obed," said Harry.

"No, I'm not. I'm a selfish old man, looking out for what will make my home happy. And that's not all. Mrs. Gilbert, didn't you tell me you had a sister—a dressmaker in New York—in poor health."

"Yes, poor Maria. She is in poor health, but cannot afford a vacation."

"You shall offer her a home with you. There's plenty of room in Carrington's house. She will be company for all of us, especially when Master Harry goes to college."

"When I go to college!" Harry ejaculated.

"Certainly! Wouldn't you like it?"

"Very much; but it would take so many years, when I could be earning nothing."

"I will see that you are provided for, Harry; but I don't want you to go away from home at present, if it can be avoided. Isn't there any one in the village with whom you can prepare for college?"

"Mr. Rodman, the minister, is an excellent scholar, and I am sure he would be glad to take a pupil."

"Then go to see him at once. Tell him I don't want him to work for nothing. I will pay him well for his services, and buy him all the sticks he needs to flog you when you require it."

"That doesn't frighten me," said Harry, smiling.

"You will wonder how I became so rich," said Mr. Wilkins, after a pause. "I will tell you. Ten years ago I befriended a young man, and furnished him the means to go to California. There he prospered, and became very rich. A year since he returned, on a visit, and, to my amazement, insisted upon my accepting seventy thousand dollars as a free gift. This, added to the little property I already had, made me worth rather over seventy-five thousand dollars. Recently, feeling lonely, I came East, intending, if my relatives here received me kindly, to make my home with them, and make Philip Ross my heir. You know how my expectations were disappointed. It was a grief to me, but

it is all right now. I look upon you and your mother as relatives, and I intend to treat you as such, and, in return, I know you will provide me with a happy home during my few remaining years."

It is needless to say what hearty assurances Uncle Obed received that his happiness would be consulted, and secured, so far as Harry and his mother were able to effect it.

The next day Uncle Obed, accompanied by Harry, went to the city, and returned the owner of the Carrington estate.

The Gilberts immediately began to make arrangements for moving into the new house. No sooner did Colonel Ross and his family receive a hint of what was going on than in amazement Mrs. Ross called at the little cottage, where she found all in confusion.

"Is it true, Uncle Obed," asked Mrs. Ross, abruptly, "that you are a rich man?"

"I believe so, Niece Lucinda," answered the old man, meekly.

"I am so glad," said Mrs. Ross, with suavity. "We all rejoice in your good fortune, dear uncle! And now, Uncle Obed, you must come over to our house at once. We will set aside the best room for you, and we will try to make you happy. This little house is not suitable for you."

"So I thought, and for that reason I have bought the Carrington place."

"So I heard," said Mrs. Ross; "but, of course, you won't think of living there alone?"

"No; Mrs. Gilbert and Harry will live with me there."

Mrs. Ross darted a glance of hatred and suspicion at the widow, whom she mentally accused of scheming for Uncle Obed's wealth.

"Better let the place, and come to live with us, dear Uncle Obed," she said, sweetly.

"No, thank you. We'll be good neighbors, Niece Lucinda, and I shall be glad to exchange calls; but I want a home of my own."

And to this determination Mr. Wilkins adhered, in spite of all his niece could say.

So Harry and his mother and his aunt took up their residence at the fine Carrington house, which Uncle Obed took care to support in a befitting manner, though not extravagantly.

He bought a horse and carriage, and engaged Tom Calder as a stable boy, as we have already hinted. Harry began at once to prepare for college, under the care of the minister.

Five years have passed away. He is now at Yale College, but comes home often to see his mother and Uncle Obed. He is one of the highest scholars in his class, and Uncle Obed is proud of his success.

He is recognized as the heir of Mr. Wilkins, much to the chagrin of Mrs. Lucinda Ross and family.

Philip is a spendthrift, and is giving his parents serious anxiety. He, too, entered college; but was expelled the first year. It is to be hoped he will some day turn over a new leaf.

For Harry I confidently expect a useful and honorable career, and I am sure that all my young readers will rejoice at the prosperity which has come to the struggling boy.

THE END





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